

THE VOYAGE  
OF ITHOBAL



EDWIN ARNOLD

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# The Voyage of Ithobal

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**IS DEDICATED TO HIS FRIEND**  
**MAJOR JAMES B. POND**  
**BY THE ATTACHED AND GRATEFUL**  
**AUTHOR**

159377

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. . . Libya shows itself to be surrounded by water, except so much of it as borders upon Asia. Neco, king of Egypt, was the first we know of, that proved this: he, when he had ceased digging the canal leading from the Nile to the Arabian Gulf, sent certain Phœnicians in ships, with orders to sail back through the Pillars of Hercules, into the Northern Sea, and so return to Egypt. The Phœnicians accordingly, setting out from the Red Sea, navigated the Southern Sea; when autumn came, they went ashore and sowed the land, by whatever part of Libya they happened to be sailing, and waited for the harvest; and having reaped the corn, they put to sea again. When two years had thus passed, in the third, having doubled the Pillars of Hercules, they arrived in Egypt, and related what to me does not seem credible, but may to others, that as they sailed round Libya, they had the sun on their right hand. Thus was Libya first known.—HERODOTUS: *Melpomene*, 42.



## CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD . . . . .	13
FIRST DAY . . . . .	25
SECOND DAY . . . . .	53
THIRD DAY . . . . .	83
FOURTH DAY . . . . .	115
FIFTH DAY . . . . .	145
SIXTH DAY . . . . .	175
SEVENTH DAY . . . . .	205



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# THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL

## Foreword

(IN THE MUSEUM)



ALF in earnest, and half in play,  
We talked, by the mummied Dead, that  
day,

Noting the bones of the catalogued Pharaohs,  
Princes and Scribes of a world far away;

Priests, with their lean brown bodies a-row,  
In Egypt embalmed many ages ago;

Waiting their souls,—which did never reclaim  
them,

What kept ye belated, Souls? Make us know!

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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But, under the glass, at the gallery's end,  
Two gilded coffers our converse suspend,  
    A dark, sweet, high-bred visage of Egypt  
Limned on the cedar: Inside, at bend

Of elbow—armlets with scarabs and gold,  
Gold rings on the delicate fingers, and fold  
    Of linen on linen, stained blue and purple,  
Binding dried bosom. A comb did hold—

A comb of coral—the rusted tress  
Laid, in a braid of lost loveliness,  
    On shapely brow and mouldered temple  
Of the stately, holy, and proud Princess;

For the name of that Lady was plain to view—  
Nesta, the Priestess of Amen-Ru—  
    And Gods and Kâs had been set to guard her  
Asleep, while the slow-footed years crept through.



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F O R E W O R D

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Bright were those eyes once—starry bright,  
Whose beauty gone was mocked by the light  
    Of agate and nacre—embalmer's symbols  
For lustre departed. Oh! of her right

Royal or high-blooded: a cartouche set  
Gives sign of the household of Hapshetket,  
    And, over the heart-spot, you see a tablet  
From the "Book of the Dead" inscribed "*Now let*

*"No hindrance come to my Judgment-Hour,  
Nor Mût be stern, nor the Measurer's power;  
    In the balance of Thoth, when my heart is lying,  
May Anubis have me in grace!"* A Flower

Of Nile's best gardens, no doubt! Beneath  
The second chest showed us a painted wreath  
    Of ships and sailors, and strange sea-monsters,  
And rocks that rise, and waves that seethe

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THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL

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Round some high soul to Amenti fled :  
And the hieroglyphs for the style of the dead  
    Ran *Ethbaal*, the son of *Magon*, blended  
'Mid boats and rowers, and Gods, with head

Of ibis, or lion, or jackal, or ape :  
Yet ever, and foremost, recurred the shape  
    Of *Kneph* with the ram's horns, *Kneph* the  
        Master  
Of Storms and of Seas, and the Southward Cape

Where all Seas finish. " Certes," I said ;  
" Some Man of Phœnicia ! a Mariner, led  
    By fate, or love, or venture, to Egypt  
In the old, old times ; and they claimed him dead.

" Ask if in life they did meet, as in death ;  
Find out, Dear, what that hidden sign saith ;  
    Sometimes you tell me of things we behold not,  
Life beyond living, speech subtler than breath."

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FOREWORD

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She laughed. But quickly her laughter died;  
Her brown eyes misted, though fixed and wide;  
Through all her body ran tender tremors,  
Silent and rigid she pressed to my side.

. . . . .

Presently, "Yes!" she sighed, "I have willed!  
The place with the Presences is filled!

I have seen that Lady! Ah! how she loved him!  
Nesta of Sais: you would have thrilled

"At beauty so rich and bold and splendid  
(Well might he worship!) 'Twas done and ended  
Twenty-five centuries back—yon Hodo  
To say to me this from his shelf descended:

*"I, Hodo—scribe—at Pharaoh's bidding, penned  
Dread tales, from their beginning to their close  
Out of the mouth of Ithobal of Tyre,  
Chief Captain of the sea, who, by strange ways,  
Saw the Dark World, and went and came. He spake*

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THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL

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*In Phenku, on his face before the King:—*

*(With whom be peace, and health and length of days!)*

*On slabs of stone I wrote it—month of Bûl—*

*Ninth year of Neko. May the Lord of Kings*

*Show mercy, and forgive this scribe his faults!*

“ Do you hear?—He wrote, by the King’s desire  
From lips of Ethbaal, famous in Tyre—

The chief Sea-Captain—a marvellous story  
Of ships which sailed thro’ tempest and fire,

“ And darkness and perils, and nether dread  
To lands and waters where none had sped:

To Libya’s Horn—Ah! here is another  
Who will not be still, till his story is said:

“ A learned one that must speak with me,  
Reader in Pharaoh’s Court was he,

Who knew the tongues and wrote the Scriptures,  
And this, he doth urge, must imparted be.

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F O R E W O R D

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*“ I, Tchat-Kensu, Reciter to the King,  
Read Hodo's stones, and did them into script  
By order of the King, that he might hear,  
Again, and yet again, at resting hours,  
The wonders of that sailing of the seas;  
Also, that men to come, finding new worlds  
And, haply, learning more the ways of Gods,  
Bear themselves humble, being 'ware that deeds  
Greater than theirs were wrought in days before.*

*“ Have you heard? This sage one—this Tchat-  
Kensu  
Lord of the Records and bidden thereto—  
Tells how he pictured that story of Hodo  
In hieroglyphs. He says, I rue*

*“ My lost scrolls more than my life, which is nought,  
For this was the mightiest marvel wrought  
On all the waters, from World's beginning  
Till the earth and the sea shall end.” Methought*

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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To ask of Ithobal—"Nay!" she replied,  
"They are gone! He, too, the man, dark-eyed,  
Terrible, noble, in Tyrian garments,  
With the great sword girded upon his side.

"Yet Nesta lingers, and seems would sing:  
Strange I can follow this ancient thing!  
Nesta of Saïs—shaking her sistrum—  
Chanting the tale of the ships of the King.

"I think she would tell us how Ithobal stood  
At Pharaoh's feet in his goodlihood;  
The brown crews kneeling around, the people  
Open-eyed, wide-mouthed, in earnest mood

"To catch those words of the wonderful sailing  
When, danger with daring countervailing  
All round that land of the nethermost darkness,  
This Captain of Tyre came back prevailing."

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## FOREWORD

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*(A Voice is heard)*

*“ Saïs, City of Neith,  
Flickered and danced in the glare:  
Danced in the blazing gold of the noon;  
Temples and gateways and trees,  
Like unto Temple-girls did these  
Dance for the glory of Neith;  
Golden and green and white and brown,  
So did the houses and groves and town,  
Walls, roofs, window-bars, up and down  
Dance for the glory of Neith.  
Shadows danced on the glass of the lake,  
Palm-fans danced in the fluttering air,  
    All for the Light's sweet sake;  
For the Goddess, mighty and glad and fair,  
Who makes for her people the golden day  
And the dear delight of the sun-warmed air,  
Twenty-five centuries back.—  
Ah, can you listen to what I say?—*

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THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL

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*Egypt under the sunshine lay,  
Basking in gold and black.*

*“ Neko was Pharaoh the King,  
Ruler of Nile and its lands,  
Lord of River and fields,  
Holding the World in his hands.*

*“ Crowded is Pharaoh’s hall;  
Columns painted and tall,  
    Cut from the rosy stones of Nile,  
Lead to the sculptured wall;  
Where the Lord of Egypt throned in state  
With glad and gracious ear doth wait  
To hear what story his ships have brought  
From the great deed wrought  
By him who sailed at the King’s command  
To the Dark and Dread of the Nether Land,  
And has come alive from those realms of death.  
‘ We will hear, we will hear, what he saith ’*



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F O R E W O R D

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*Hath issued decree, and the King doth sit  
To listen to all the marvel of it,  
With Princes and priests and slaves about,  
And of sailors and negroes a rout;  
Yet all eyes bound  
Not upon Pharaoh's face, but his  
Who in the midst of this,  
His brown crew kneeling anigh, recites,  
While Hodo the writer writes  
How he hath come and how he did go  
By ways on the waters which none did know.*

*“ Who is this that is standing,  
Greater than Pharaoh is great,  
Wearing no robe of state,  
But lordly, large, and commanding;  
And in his eyes the fire  
Of the Hawk of Horus, when out of the cloud  
He stoops, and his hot desire  
Is quenched in the flesh of the quarry slain,*

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THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL

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*And the bold bird glides again  
Back to his niche in the temple wall ?  
Ithobal in that hall  
Satisfied, resolute, stained by the Sun,  
Telleth to Pharaoh what things he hath done ;  
So did my lord to the King  
Relate this marvellous thing."*





THE FIRST DAY

## The First Day

*Ithobal, Captain of the Sea,  
Thus spake how it befell that he  
Of Pharaoh's ships did have command  
To sail unto the unseen land.*



LONG life to Pharaoh! May the high Gods  
make

Ever his greatness greater! I am he,  
His servant and the Captain of his ships,  
Ithobal, born of Tyre, bred by marge  
Of sea, and nursed upon the breast of the sea,  
To learn her ways, as little children learn  
The anger and the tenderness of her  
Who feeds, and chides, and fashions them to men.

Lo! as land-dwellers con the ways of earth,  
The chariot-road, the camel's path in the sand,  
The halting places and the drinking wells,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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And where will be good grass, and where the rocks  
Hide robbers, and the swamp is home for snakes,  
And what to-morrow's march shall bring of hap,  
If suns sets ruddy, if he rises pale ;  
So grew I from the first to know my Sea,  
My ship's path on the purple and the green,  
The friendly reefs would give her refuges,  
The rugged deadly coasts that she must shun,  
And where fair water was and pirates lurked,  
And how to hold a vessel's painted eyes  
Straight to the furrow that her stem must plough  
Over those dancing meadows of the deep,  
All day by golden guidance of the sun,  
All night with shimmer of the Star of Tyre,  
Set in the north by Ishtar for our sakes.  
This lore of the wide waters I did gain,  
And ere my chin was bearded sailed and sailed  
Over the midland main ; threading the isles  
Coasting the Greek and Tuscan gulfs ; one year  
Moored to a Libyan palm tree, and the next

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*T H E F I R S T D A Y*

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Rocking beneath black shade of northern pines.  
So did I win, ere I was man, as far  
As where the Western gateway of that sea  
Opens by Kalpe and the seven-topped mount  
Into what no man knoweth of—a waste  
Of waves as vast as time and dark as death,  
Wherein the sun himself did die each night,  
Plunging, 'twas said, with seethe of dripping gold  
Into the blue. Voyaging home again  
With many a Keel I searched the sea of Suph  
Which washes Misraim, and the emerald hills,  
And all thy Libya down to distant Punt,  
And where by Gate of Wailing one might come,  
If one dared come, into the nether worlds.  
Wherefrom five years ago returning, full  
Of perils past and passion to meet more,  
I broke my galley on a bladdered shelf  
Which lay in the dark like shadow of a cloud.  
We shed upon the brine gilt cloths enough  
To robe it like an arch-priest, and of spice

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Rich bales to sweeten all its bitter salt  
With fragrance such as have the breasts of her  
Who lies by Syria's Lord. My ship I lost,  
My goods, my gathered profit, and my crew,  
Save certain here whom the deep cannot drown,  
Storm-seasoned against Fate. With these came I  
Beggared to Saïs but for one rare pearl,  
Fished on a moonlit night by the Isle of Birds,  
Which lay, a moon itself, safe at my waist.  
So wended I, stripped by my mother-sea,  
Angry, to Tyre, the great pearl in my belt  
And that hard hunger gnawing at my heart,  
To find what lay beyond the Uttermost  
Whence storm and death did drive back Ithobal.

But what the high gods will the high gods bring  
After their fashion. Wrathfully I lay  
In shadow of Lord Melkarth's marble house  
That looks o'er many-storied Tyre, and dips  
In the Sidonian port its image wan.



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*T H E F I R S T D A Y*

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Listless I lay, bewailing evil fate,  
Life broken like my ship, my fruitless gifts  
On Ishtar's altar; when a silver dove—  
Ishtar's own bird it seemed—lit at my foot,  
Preening its shining feathers, stretching forth



Its glittering neck, and with red pattering feet  
Hither and thither pacing, out of reach  
As who would tempt to follow. Half amazed,  
Half wayward, I pursue the eluding bird  
Which flutters, all its silver in the sun  
Asparkle, down the steps of the temple porch,  
Over the paved way, through the Tanners' Street,  
Along the quay where murex-fishers press

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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The purple from the sea-shells, at each flight  
Lending me promise I might stroke the wings  
Twinned-argent, and perchance capture the prize,  
The wonder, all of living lustre made.  
So did it draw me, foolish, blind, bemused,  
Into the quarter of the slave-market ;  
Then with light beat of pinion soared away  
T'ward Ishtar's shrine.

In ill-content I raised

The curtain of the market-entry ; there  
The brokers with their tablets and their scales  
Sold boys and women for the temple chests,  
As is the wont. A shaded closure gave  
Shelter to buyers, and a stage arose,  
By steps attained, where one by one were set  
The slaves, the votive maidens, and the spoil  
Of war or traffic. Loud the clamour was  
Of wrangling scribes and haggling customers  
Computing and disputing. Not before

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*T H E F I R S T D A Y*

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Witnessed I this, and had no mood to stay ;  
For the great sea is jealous, and my heart  
Until that day had followed only her,  
Knowing not, or but scantily, what new might  
May spring forth from an eye-glance, and what  
    spells

Bind boldest spirits with a touch or tone :  
And how a woman's hair may hold the soul  
The storm-rope of a galley could not check.  
Moreover what the Gods decree will be.

For, Mighty Pharaoh ! as I turned on heel  
They lead upon the platform, for vile sale,  
Undraped, before those buyers clinking gold,  
This one—this lady of my life and deeds,  
Who kneeleth thy veiled handmaid here to-day ;  
Chosen by Ishtar, guardian and guide  
Of our vast travel, and to bring thee here  
This day, dread king ! the glory never matched  
Of nether worlds unlocked, Heaven's secret told :

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Seeing that it befell at moment when  
They bared her proud and glorious goodlihood  
To that coarse crowd, and cried her prices forth,  
I knew my fate shewn in the queenly face,  
The eyes, high-couraged 'mid their pain and shame,  
The mouth, tender and proud, with lips as red  
As new pomegranate buds, and teeth as white  
And even as a row in th' opening corn:  
In stature a dark cypress, in her step  
A free gazelle of the desert, of that throng  
Mistress and scorner though the knotted cord  
Lay shameful on her neck; the master's mark  
Was set on cloth of Africa she bore,  
Now rudely reft. Then knew I why the bird  
Fluttered and fooled me to this selling spot—  
A dove of living silver who'er saw?—  
Then knew I that this woman must be mine,  
Though she cost gold—though she cost stars—cost  
life!

But not yet knew I how the most wise Gods

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*T H E F I R S T D A Y*

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Had hid their secret in her and bestowed  
By love my triumph.

From long distant springs  
Whence old Nile flows in lands without a name  
Captive she came, from royal palace torn  
In some realm far away, 'neath other stars—  
Well nigh another world; by native suns  
Stamped the soft colour of the ripening date;  
Skin like the three-ply'd byssus Sidon weaves;  
Visage and mien of Princess, born to sway;  
Of fear and shame and falseness innocent;  
And speaking speech as gentle as when morn  
Whispers in palm tops. For she marked me, too,  
And shot one quick glance from those lustrous  
orbs;  
Then, beckoning me, murmured in broken words:  
“Thou, thou, at last, my Lord! Buy me, I pray!  
Many a night I saw thee in my dreams:  
Thou art the man of Tyre, strong Ithobal,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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A master of the sea, and I am thine,  
Thy servant and thy helper like the sea;  
I have an errand to thee from the Gods;  
Buy me, my master, I shall pay thee back!"

Thereat astonied, joyous, yet perplexed,  
I stood with them that bid; and one cried thus,  
Another thus much more, another more,  
And yet another most, till one grey lord  
Tore from his wrinkled neck the chain of sards  
Carved curious in Egypt, laid in gold,  
And spake, " Sir broker! thou dost put to sale  
A moon of heaven; 'twere worth an old man's  
wealth

To die on such a bosom; look! I give  
My chain for gage that I will melt my ships,  
Three Keels of Tarshish, into what shall pay  
Ten thousand ounces for thy Nesta there."

Then the beards wagged and baffled dealers drew

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*T H E F I R S T D A Y*

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Forth from the press, while the slave-master said :

“ The proffer of Lord Eshmûn is well made ;  
A moon from heaven is this rare Libyan girl—  
Good market at ten thousand ounces ; yet  
Our Tyrian law forbids we sell a slave  
Without the leave once to deny herself  
To owner undesired, if that she find  
Another to her mind will overpass  
The topmost offer. Lady, dost thou take  
Lord Eshmûn for thine owner, or wilt name  
Some other venturer who liketh thee,  
If such a buyer be? ” The girl, at this,  
Quoth softly, “ Sell me to Lord Ithobal.”

And some waxed wroth, and some laughed scorn-  
fully,

But I, with angry hand, loosening my hilt,  
Strode forward of them, and from forth my waist  
Drew the great pearl and said, “ Sir broker ! ask  
Thy fellows of the scale what worth holds that

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Measured in ounces? I do give it thee  
To buy this maiden." Then their puckered eyes  
Hung o'er the milky treasure, and they smote  
Their breasts and cried, " This is a wonder-stone ;  
Its like was never seen save on the throat  
Of Thammuz when he roved with Heav'n's bright  
Queen,

And got for love-gifts certain of the stars.  
If those three ships ten thousand ounces fetch,  
Lord Eshmûn, this could build as many more ;  
Wilt thou give twenty thousand ounces told,  
Bidding the Tyrian Captain keep his pearl? "

But that grey lord across an evil face  
Drew his fringed-cloth, departing ; and we came,  
Nesta and I, unto my house in Tyre.

In that new air of love, so sweet, so strange,  
Many days ligg'd I ; and did quite forget  
My calling, and the calling of the sea ;  
More and more gathering from her honeyed lips



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*T H E F I R S T D A Y*

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What wisdom and what wonders lay behind  
The brow and breasts of sun-stained ivory :  
Learning to better know her foreign speech,  
Which mingled with the language later taught :  
Sometimes reciting,—head upon her knees,  
Or pillowed on her neck,—tales of Old Tyre,  
Of Melkarth's fane, and of high Ashtaroth,  
The seven great Gods without a name, the loves  
Of Shadid and the Moon. Or she would sing  
Soft songs in unknown cadences, to beat  
Of snake-skin, or of silver sistrum's thrill,  
Moving the mind to passion or to peace,  
As storms and light winds stir the waves. But I  
Noted no waves—albeit our lattice gave  
Full on the Egyptian harbour where there came  
By sunlight, and by stargleam, goodly craft—  
Two-banked and three-banked,—mighty ships of  
war,  
Girdled with shining shields ; and ships of peace  
Stuffed to their bursting hatches with rich bales

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Of dyed cloths and of frankincense and gum.  
Vainly for Ithobal bellied their sails;  
Their painted flags danced vain against the sky,  
Their straining rigging creaked, their dripping oars  
Beat the brine into milk; his playfellows,  
The barque, the billow, and the boundless marge  
Pleased him no more; in Nesta's heart he slept,  
A galley anchored in a land-locked bay.

Yet what the Gods ordain that thing will fall.  
We sat one eve on the cool roof, and watched  
The Lord of Day go glorious to his bath  
In gold and purple splendours of the West;  
And when I said, "I know that path he goes,  
And something too I know what path he comes  
From the East desert and its rivers twain;  
And over black and yellow breeds of men;  
But no one knows, not Bel's great self I think,  
The Southward of our world. See!"—and I drew  
With finger dipped in the spilled Lesbian wine

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*T H E F I R S T D A Y*

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A rude map on the marble bench ; “ See ! here  
Sits Egypt ; by her side the sea of Suph,  
And past that sea is Punt which I have viewed,  
For some do come there making perilous trade ;  
But all beyond is nought—night, silence, death—  
None knoweth or can know.”



She wet with wine  
A finger, and, with light laugh, featly made  
A finish to my picture on the stone ;  
Saying, “ Dear honoured lord, but I do know !  
It is not night, nor death, nor darkness there,  
But such a land that this thy Syria

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Counts but for curtilage, and Egypt's self  
A melon-garden. Where thou shutt'st in Punt,  
The mighty coast sweeps southward girt with sea,  
And southward still and southward till you come  
To mine own country." Then she murmured  
forth,—

Like a dove cooing never-ending notes  
Of something sweet and secret in her wood  
Unfolding leaf by leaf,—stories of skies  
Whereunder she was born, with stars and peaks  
Not known to ours; of mighty streams that sprang  
From mountain bosoms lifting changeless snows  
Into the central blue, which, leaping down  
By monstrous cataract and reeded reach,  
Full of strange creatures that did swim and fly,  
And banked by woodlands flowery, wild, and still,  
Poured over thirsty sands green wealth of crops,  
Feeding much people. And what seas there were,  
Wide inland seas shut in the knees of hills,  
Which held no salted drop and felt no tides,

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*T H E F I R S T D A Y*

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Yet whereupon a well-rowed boat might pass  
And spy for seven whole days no land at all.  
Of marvellous tribes she babbled, pigmy folk  
Mouse-skinned and munching roots; of man-eaters  
Whose horrid food were what they took in war;  
Some that went stark as stones; and some that bore  
Bark dyed like butterflies, or speckled skins,  
Or pied, or tawny, from the forest won,  
With ornament fantastic of pierced bone,  
Coral and cowrie, and rude-spangled bead.  
Of countless herds she spoke, white goats and black,  
Kine, wild and gentle, and the long-tailed sheep,  
And apes like unto men; grim things of the waste  
Whose names put terror in her tender voice—  
In mine ears meaningless. Also their kings,  
What savage state these kept; and of their gods,  
What images were made in wood and stone,  
Iron and gold and silver; for she touched  
The plates of gold tied in her clustering hair  
And said, “ This groweth there; our daily grain

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Was dressed in this." And of the birds she spake;  
Wonderful birds, like flowers equipped with wings  
Blazing in blue and gold and rainbow hues;  
Of serpents that did drag a mottled bulk,  
Thick as an ox-girth, through the crackling brake,  
Full thirty cubits long. Of creatures dreamed  
Only in nightmare, as I thought; sea-cows  
And river-horses, and a beast that fed  
With spotted muzzle mid the topmost boughs;  
Huge pigs that wore horned daggers on the nose,  
And elephants that went like moving hills  
Through the affrighted thickets; lions dire,  
With estridges their ivory eggs a-heap  
For suns to hatch, and lizards fathom long,  
And other brutes which walked in armoured suits  
Like the mailed men of Elam. For all this  
A land, she said, fair in some parts as Earth  
Hath fairest; and with many a race renowned  
For meekness, friendliness, and courtesy,  
Mild to the stranger, piteous to the weak;

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*T H E F I R S T D A Y*

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Herself the daughter of a sovereign  
Puissant in arms, opulent, rich in love,  
In reverence and worship from his folk,  
Far, far beyond that marble edge whereto  
She drew the willing wine: from whose kind  
    throne,  
Torn in her childhood by a treachery,  
She had become a wanderer, and mine.

O King! if thou hast seen thy Nile pour down  
At rain-break, rushing o'er his stones to the sea;  
If thou hast seen on Suph the summer flood  
Come home in foam and freshets to each gulf  
When the great South wind roars; so did my heart,  
Which is thy servant, once more burn for the beach  
As this dusk teacher opened wide the doors,  
And showed me where to look for that which  
    crowns

Even thyself with glory. Since she said,—  
Whenever in that journey of her lips

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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I stayed and questioned her, " Yea, there and there  
We saw the sea ; no mountain-margined pool  
But Kneph's own water dreadful, shining, wide,  
Rolling its billows southward, northward still,  
How far our farthest coast men answer not."

What the high gods will have falls at its hour ;  
For, sitting at the lattice with new eyes,  
Awake from love and seeing clear again,  
So that once more the ships were friends to me,  
The noise of rowers' music, the sea's voice  
Under those white walls full of private words ;  
There came, great Pharaoh ! messengers from thee,  
Egyptians of thy household, men of worth,  
Envoys to Tyre. We heard a herald blow  
A conch-shell, and the cymbals played, and one  
From a papyrus spake these words aloud  
In hearing of the town : " To friendly men,  
To mariners of Tyre, the lord of lords,  
The Pharaoh ruling over Misraim,



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*T H E F I R S T D A Y*

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Sendeth goodwill and greeting. He hath need  
Of sailors for a thing he hath to do,  
A voyage of ships full perilous, but full  
Of guerdon in the going, and of more  
In the returning, if there hap return;  
Since these ships sail to harbours never seen.  
Well known ye are, of Tyre and Sidon sons,  
For craft upon the waters; if there be  
Those that fear danger less than they hate sloth,  
Those seasoned with the salt, who will take wage  
And service with the Pharaoh for this work,  
Let them ask service." And with this was flung  
Largesse among the folk, yet no man stirred.

Outspake an ancient one, from Ascalon:  
"Ye men of Tyre take heed! Three winters past  
Across the brook of Egypt I and some  
Wended with camels, and came thither where  
The east horn of the Lord of Egypt's Sea  
Juts green into the Stony Land; we saw

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Along the shore three crosses; on them hung  
What of three men the kites and crows had left—  
Dried skull, and skin, and bones. ‘What wrought  
these ones,’

We asked, ‘that they should moulder in the sun?’  
And the folks said: ‘These are three officers  
Conspired against the peace of Pharaoh; he  
Willing to spare their lives bade them take ship  
And sail and sail over past utmost bound  
To fetch him secrets from the dark; but they  
After ten moons of travel clapped on wing  
Of homeward voyage. Reaching home they  
cried:—

“Better to die than bear what we have borne  
Fronting the frightful perils of yon world  
Which hath a death on every wave, a hell  
At every cape. Kill us, but send not there.”  
And Pharaoh paid their wages, slaying them.”

But Nesta bent upon me those dark eyes,

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*T H E F I R S T D A Y*

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Deep as the sea, and spake, " This is for thee,  
Ithobal, son of Magon, lord and lover,  
The gods do bring thy heart and wish in one.  
Rise and make parley with these men of Nile;  
It is thy work, and I shall help thy work;  
Thou art the man they seek." And while she spake  
The silver dove of Ishtar fluttered in,  
Perched at my elbow, cooed a dulcet note,  
Then darted seaward with a singing wing  
In token that the gods would have their will.  
But when they said in Tyre, " Ithobal goes  
In service of the Pharaoh to build ships  
Which shall at Pharaoh's charge sail the dark seas  
Nether of nethermost and past the bounds  
Where boldest oar hath dipped," the white town  
    poured  
All its sea-people round me, for 'tis known  
How multitudinous Tyre sits on the wave,  
And what throngs, many-coloured, swarm her  
    quays,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Doing the business of the waters. There  
Were traders from the isles loud-trafficking  
With such as brought by weary caravan  
Fir boards and cedar out of Lebanon;  
And patient shapers of the bladed oar  
Bargaining for Bashan oak and ivory  
To edge the rowing benches; Chittin men,  
Swarthy and watchful, and the Ashurites,  
And those that traded linen, white and blue  
Or bordered, to make sails; sea wolves sun-  
tanned

From Sidon and from Arvad; mixed with these  
The wise grey master-pilots of the place,  
Quick to catch tidings, knowing all the seas,  
But beating on their breasts at word of this;  
Caulkers from Gebal, wotting well to keep  
Seams tight and hull wave-worthy; companies  
Of shipmen come from Elam, Lud and Phut;  
Merchants and fighting folk busy with bales  
Or cleaning shields, or pointing arrow-heads,

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*T H E F I R S T D A Y*

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Or fitting spears with new-forged blades; those  
called

The Gemmadin, with sturdy cargoers  
Of Tarshish, Javan, Meshech, clamorous they  
To sell their slaves and vaunt their brazen ware.  
Togharmah dealers drew into our throng  
Lean, keen-eyed, desert-born, leading their strings  
Of mules and horses; and from Dedan those  
Who bring the tusks of elephant, the myrrh,  
The ebony, and gum. Swart Syrians  
Bartering for cloths of Tyre stained by the shell  
Their emeralds, corals, agates; bearded Jews  
Selling their wheat from Minnith, honey, oil,  
And balm of Pannag; and Damascus-breds  
Plying their business with white bleachèd wools,  
And wines of Helbon: with such come from Dan  
Who sold bright iron, cassia, calamus,  
Cushions for chariots: tribesmen from the sands  
Of Araby with lambs and rams, and shawls  
Of camel-hair for tents; and Raamah sent,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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And Sheba, coffers filled with subtle spice,  
Fine stones, turkis and sard and lazuli  
And powdered gold. Haran and Canneh there  
Put forth their stores of blue and broidered work  
And chests of rich apparel, bound with cords  
On scented cedar. All the noise of these,  
The singing of the sailors, and the cries  
Of sellers, and the stir of the bazaar,  
The dance-girls, the snake-charmers, drum-players,  
The fortune-tellers, minstrels, priests that begged  
Alms for the temples—all broke off and heard,  
All stayed and listened, and drew nigh to us  
Along the water-face of Tyre that eve,  
Knowing of Ithobal and how he took  
Service with Pharaoh, with my lord the King.

Also at parting there was sacrifice  
To those who rule the sea,—the Fish-tailed God  
And the Twin Stars and the Seven Nameless  
Ones.

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*T H E F I R S T D A Y*

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But when in Ishtar's fane they brought to slay  
Two boys of Africa limbed like young deer,  
Soft-voiced but speaking most with wistful  
eyes,  
Whom the grey priests that go her altar round



Would offer for the speeding of our voyage,  
'Twas lady Nesta took the knife away  
From the stretched hands and cut the bonds of  
those,  
Handah and Gondah, saying, " Take the price  
In sheep or camel for the thing ye do ;  
My lord and I did trace the journey's plan

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

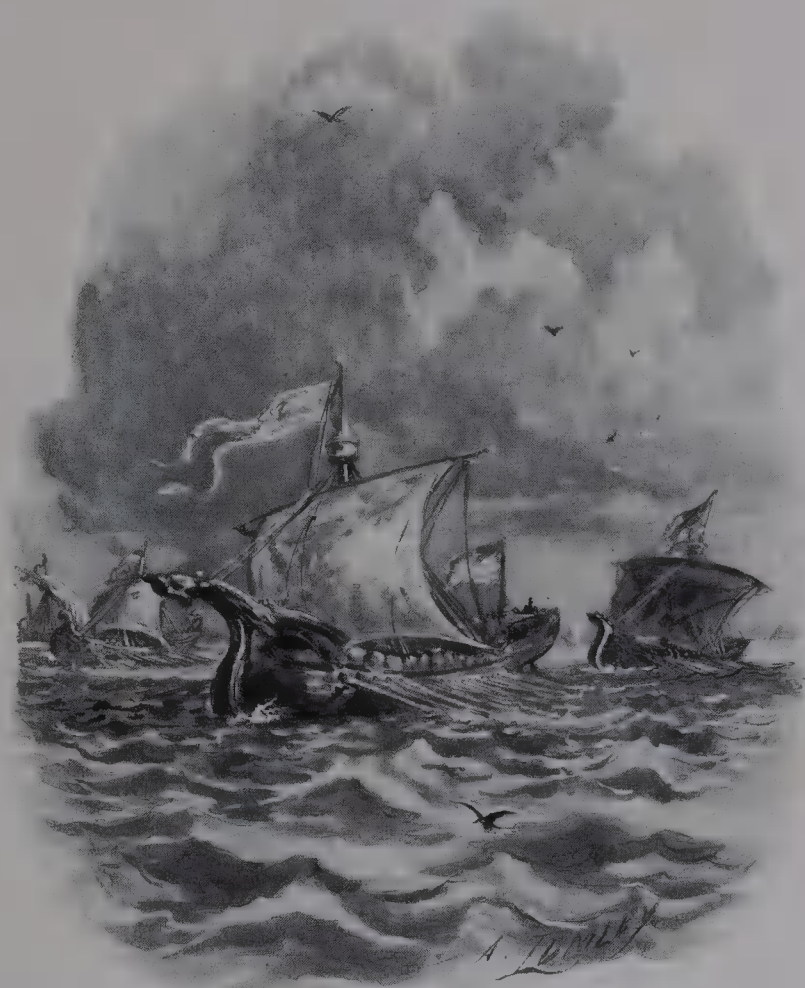
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With wine, not blood, and so will follow it,  
Bloodless, if this may be, since pity comes  
To those that pity." And behold those here  
Safe and most faithful among faithful found.

END OF THE FIRST DAY.







## The Second Day

*Ithobal, Magon's son, of Tyre  
Hath comfort for his heart's desire;  
He builds in Egypt galleys three  
To sail unto the unknown Sea.*



AY the King live for ever! By thy soul;  
By thy magnificence and majesty;  
Not less than such a treasure-house  
as thine,

No bounty meaner than great Pharaoh's grace,  
No hand less open and no weaker heart  
Than thine, O Lord of Lords! had plenitude  
For charges of this high emprise. Our Tyre,  
With all her pride, her merchants bold and keen,  
Her ships shut off into the Midland Sea,  
Her sailors fearless and her pilots wise  
Held no heart for the task sore tempting her.  
Thy kingly wish it was, thy kingly word,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Thy largesse, broad and fertile as the Nile,  
Called me to be thy captain, and bestowed  
With godlike power the means to work thy will;  
And bring thee, as I bring, thy biddings done.

Nigh fifty moons ago—thou knowest, Lord!  
Before thy throne I kneeled in this same hall  
And heard thy word, how thine Egyptians brought  
Tales whispered from the stillness of the South  
Of lands outside known land, and wash of seas  
Beyond heard waters where, what seemed to stand  
The edge of the Earth, might haply stretch afar,  
Might haply keep in darkness some new light,  
In silence some strange voice, in the will of the Gods  
Some golden secrets held for hardihood:  
And how that darkness vexed thy royal soul;  
And how that silence teased thee, and the thought  
Though thou were Lord of Nile and didst command  
Suph and her shores, there might be territory,  
Goodly to gain, and spread of sovereignty,

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THE SECOND DAY

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And godlike deeds to do, if one knew where.  
And saying, "Thus much wot we," thou didst bid  
Thy scribes unroll the painted skins that shewed  
The sea lines and the land lines where they stayed.  
Then I, who had sailed boldest of my time,  
Marked, at thy mandate, to what spot I went  
Farthest of far. And when thou saidst to me  
"What is yet farther, and how might we reach  
To tear the truth from Kneph?" humbly I gave  
Reply and spake: "Kneph and the mighty gods  
Alone know this: yet if a King should grant  
Gold and the gifts to build three stalwart ships  
Here on thy sea; and freight them full of gear;  
And fit them in such wise to mock at storms;  
And man them with picked companies enured  
To close obedience and contempt of fate,  
With rowers seasoned to the labouring oar,  
And watchful timoneers, and men-at-arms  
Chosen for bravest; I, tried sailor here,  
Ithobal, son of Magon, at his word

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Would from the silent gods their secret pluck  
Or leave my life where I did lose his ships.”

Then, mighty Pharaoh! thou didst answer me,  
“ Build me those ships on these my waters here ;  
Build at what cost thou wilt to make them stout,  
As if the beams were of red gold, and decks  
Of planished silver. Stuff them with such gear  
As largest forethought asks. Fill them with store  
Of all thy longest travel could demand.  
Hire me from Tyre or Sidon, whence thou wilt,  
Picked mariners and skilful timoneers  
And valiant men-at-arms who know thy flag,  
And will not dread to follow where it flies.  
Thou art of Pharaoh’s service, Ithobal,  
From this day’s noon ; and ye, chief councillors,  
Put a red robe of honour on this man ;  
Give him a guard ; and wearing this my ring,  
Command my overseers, treasurers,  
Store-keepers, officers, artificers,

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*T H E   S E C O N D   D A Y*

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To grant all asked, of timbers, leathers, brass,  
Victuals, and viands, honey, grain and oil,  
Fulfilling what he will." So spakest thou,  
Most royal master, lordliest of all lords!

Thus did I build and build. A windless creek  
Turns hither from the western horn of Suph—  
Which hath two horns upon the northern end  
Of thy Red Water—turns to 'Ataka.  
Broad yellow sands athwart the green waves look  
To Moosa's Fountain, and grey mountains piled,  
Peaks which take morning first, and rosy crags  
That see the last of sunset over Cush.  
There did we choose a spot with easy slope  
To the dimpled inlet, and good underground  
To take the cradles, while to that same place,  
Moon after moon, thy bounty brought to me  
Food for the toil; acacia wood, palm logs,  
Sont, and, for stubborn knee-pieces and bends,  
Grey iron-bark; also from Lebanon

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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By raft or caravan, fair cedar planks,  
Trimmed to fine edge, and pine-tree poles to make  
Masts, and for benches lengths of sycamore,  
With oak and ash for oars, and iron clamps  
To knit the joints, and nails of bronze to bind  
Timber to timber. And with these things came  
Mechanics out of Tarshish, Sidon, Tyre,  
Cunning to wield the mallet and the adze;  
Carpenters, skilled to dovetail to a hair;  
Smiths, who knew well with hammer and with tongs  
To bend the brass taking their will like wax.  
These came with sawyers, caulkers, sailmakers,  
And those deep-crafty the green hides to twist  
In cord and cable; or from hair and flax  
Halyard and brace to braid; chiefs of the band,  
The master-builders with their compasses  
And reed-pens marking measurements, most  
shrewd  
To note if any faulty baulk or knot  
Creep with the sound stuff midst our goodly gear



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THE SECOND DAY

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And at some pinch bewray us. Succoured thus,  
Well did our building fare by edge of sea.

Three ships we planned to build,—biremes,—to  
bulk

Large for our stores and sailors; not too large  
To take the shore at need and deftly pass  
Inside the reefs, by narrow channel ways,  
When seas were angry. Ships that in the calm  
Might lightly wend with measured stress of oars,  
Or, if fair winds did blow, sea-worthy spread  
Their painted wings. The first, of my command,  
Should be The Silver Dove; in length 'twas schemed  
Sixty-five cubits, and in beam eleven;  
Row-seats, of under deck fifteen a-side;  
Of upper row-seats, to the right and left,  
Two-score. Forward and afterward, strong built,  
Cabins enclosed; and round her sides a run  
Of gallery, where mariners should work  
Nor foul the oarsmen. In the foremost part,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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A mast of pine with laddered shrouds, well-stayed;  
And knitted linen sails, wide for light airs,  
Scanty for blustering breezes; oar-ports carved  
For seventy blades. Under the Thalamites,—  
The lower rowers,—goodly space should stretch  
Where stores would lie, and waste sea-water drain,  
And the fair ship at need take ballast in.  
Light must she be for hauling; strong for shocks,  
Ample to house her company: this ship  
Was mine and Lady Nesta's with the best  
Gathered about us for the enterprise:  
No slave band straining sullen at the looms,  
But free men of the sea, good at the oar,  
Good at the tackle, good at need with spear  
Or sling or bow: tried mariners whereof  
Hanno the Carchedonian, under me,  
Had mastership; comrade in bygone days.  
Built like to this, but of bulk scantier,  
Was Ram of Kneph, with fifty rowing men,  
Hiram of Tyre her captain: joined with him

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*T H E   S E C O N D   D A Y*

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My sister's son, Hamilcar. Last and third,  
The Black Whale whereupon Nimroud did rule,  
With Sothës the Egyptian. She should bear  
Forty stout oars and be provision craft,  
Close stuffed with goods and gear and merchandise.

These did we fashion as a man doth frame  
That which life hangs on and the ends of life,  
Not matching board nor morticing a beam  
Save, mighty King, as if the eye of Thoth  
Noted our labouring, to spare or slay  
As each one's duty went into the work.  
We laid false keels dressed out of stubborn stuff,  
From stem to stem, to take the slippery sand,  
The grinding shelf : bolted and fanged them home  
Into the solid keels ; and over those,  
The kelsons moulded into one with them :  
Atop of all false kelsons, where the feet  
Of the masts stood fast. Across them and across  
Bolted the sister-beams ; built up the ribs ;

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Worked in the elbow-pieces and the knees ;  
Braced them with tough ties ; wedged the transom-  
ends ;

Drove home the deck supports ; and covered in  
The hollow wombs of these with bedded planks,  
Doubled below ; and every seam and joint  
Nicely with pitch sealed in and palm fibres.

In all their sides we cut the ports for oars  
Rimmed and well rounded ; and to every port  
The leathern sleeve true fixed, lest the rude sea  
Break through upon the rowers.

When 'twas wrought,  
And the three goodly ships lay trim and strong,—  
Sea-things that took a life from shape and sheen,  
And seemed like Ocean's children, keen to dip  
Their breasts in the flood,—we stepped the masts in  
each ;

Set up the standing tackle ; hoisted yards ;  
Fitted abaft the two great oars that steer ;

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*T H E S E C O N D D A Y*

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Bedecked each hull in colours glad and gay,  
Reddening the prows and painting bold and bright  
Each vessel's eyes, where the wide binding boards  
Drew fine into the stem, fair-finishing  
With each craft's emblem; mine a silver dove,  
Ishtar's bright sign—to keep the Goddess ours—  
And on the Ram of Kneph, the Lord of Waves,  
Figured in brass and ivory, for guide  
Of Hanno's crew. But Hiram had for his  
A great whale spouting, carved in ebony.  
We launched them light, not straining the new  
    hulls  
Till seams should tighten, soaked; and all defaults  
Show plain. But like sea-nymphs born for the  
    brine,  
Comely, defectless on the flood they sate.

Next, ship by ship, we laded, tier on tier  
Stowing our merchandise; the cloth, the beads,  
The wares wild people love, spare goods and gear,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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And over these in tall red jars, the grain ;  
Flour for the ship-cakes, honey, oil, pulse, meal,  
Dried fish, and rice, and salted goods. Nor wine  
Was lacking ; seasoning herbs and kitchen stuff ;  
Nor camel-cheese, nor dates. The water-pots  
At each port we should fill. Phoenician hands  
Well know to pack a hold, wasting small space.  
All lay in order ; each man had his niche.

Afterwards in full council I unfold  
How we shall voyage. This near sea is known.  
Ishtar's bright bird on prow of Ithobal  
Safely will wing her way from point to point,  
From reef to reef, on western shore of Suph ;  
From Klysmā to Greek Harbour ; by Kosseir ;  
Under the emerald mount and 'Ataka ;  
Down past Aidhab, and where the hills of Kus  
Shut off the sinking sun, till we attain,  
Four hundred leagues from this, past many isles,  
An island green and grey. The black rocks jag

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THE SECOND DAY

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Its lonely steeps; on this side and on that  
The sea frets in a narrow passaging,  
All day and night making its moan; for there  
Is "Gate of Lamentation," whence we pass,  
By this hand or by that, out from those seas  
That bear a name. Thus far 'tis training time;  
We and our vessels will become acquaint.  
And thus far shall these three, The Silver Dove,  
The Ram and Whale securely wend: by day,  
If north wind favours, spreading square sails wide;  
If no wind blows over the poop, with oars;  
By night reposing, when the sea rolls strong,  
On shore well chosen; if the sea be still,  
At anchor; save if Ishtar's kindly moon  
Shine and 'tis good to make of night a day,  
Lessening the leagues, and leagues and leagues to  
come.

Moreover for the slow the swift must wait,  
Or by clear signals lead to meeting-place;

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Best safety will still lie in fellowship.

We set for each the watches ; such an hour  
For toil, and such for food ; at such an hour  
Due worship to the gods ; and then at such  
To cleanse each ship, and broken gear refit,  
And bail the holds, and grease the rowing-ports.  
Also, by signs made, when to take the land,  
And how to beach, and how to set a guard ;  
And who should search the fountains out, and fill  
The water-pots ; and who make friendly parle  
With native people, opening markets so ;  
And what was good to buy and just to give.

'Twas common lore of mariners how Suph  
Sleeps in a tideless bed, nor feels that moon  
Which at her full draws the wide waters up,  
And at her dark half drops them. Thy Red Sea,  
Great Pharaoh ! belting in all Misraim here,  
By no streams fed, bordered by burning sands  
Or sun-baked mountains, sucks the ocean in



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*T H E   S E C O N D   D A Y*

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To give it forth again in mist and dew :  
So, if one lay his ship upon a beach,  
No certain flood will come to lift her off,  
As otherwhere : but if the wind blow strong  
This way or that a current runs will raise  
The waters to two cubits or to three.  
Well-nigh through all the year a North-West  
creams

The blue with silver ; it shall fill our sails  
Dawn after dawn till at the ninth moon's end—  
Two moons from setting forth—we reach that isle  
Baulking the southern breeze, would hold us back ;  
Albeit as ye pass outside, by then,  
The season mellows and the soft monsoon—  
Prayed for of Arab sailors—breathing mild  
Out of the white North-West, shall waft us on  
Whither I know not, nor its winds nor tides.

Followed brave days ; the north wind filled our  
sails,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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The green sea glittered under 'Ataka,  
Then, deepening, changed to blue, and sparkled  
bright

In spume and long-laced breaker, where reef edge  
Breasted its roll. A good day's travel done—  
Sufficeth if we finish fifteen leagues

With sheet and blade—at dark we find some nook  
Of favouring shoal or friendly promontory,  
Where my three ships could sleep safe moored, or  
rest

Aground. Then some on shore lit cooking fires;  
And some spread nets to catch the finny food;  
And some adventured into thickets near  
For fuel, or what game might be afoot,  
Or fruits and gums and herbs. Glad they did  
stretch

Limbs cramped from shipboard on the dry clean  
sand,

Or chase with bow in hand the shy gazelle;  
Or barter with the wild-eyed villagers;

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*T H E   S E C O N D   D A Y*

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To some all strange, but not to Nesta here,  
My Lady of the Land, who knew its face—  
As daughter knows the mother's eyes and lips—  
And knew its flowers and trees, and why they grew,  
And which were good and evil. Nay, one eve



This spacious deed had in beginning died  
But for my lady. On the beach we paced,  
The sun being just gone down, and heedlessly  
I set my sandal on some mouldering bark :  
Forth from the crackle slipped a hooded asp  
Which stung and stung again. I mocked at the  
worm :

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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But Nesta, sweet orbs wide—lips drawn—teeth  
set—

Clutched me and cried, “Thou hast three hours to  
live,

Dear lord, except I find the serpent-root  
In some near brake.” Then, stooping first, she  
sucked

Those two small wounds, and spitting on the sand,  
Ran to the thicket; presently returned,  
Some plant in hand which had a whitish leaf,  
With prickles, and the blossom like a snake;  
Of this she chews and chews, binds leaf and root  
Over the limb; then from her bosom draws  
Some sacred thing curiously wrought in gold,  
Which helped her at her prayers, and clasping  
that,

Pillowed my hot brows on her gentle knees.  
I had much thirst; meseems I nearly swooned,  
But woke unharmed with Nesta watching near.  
But, “Master dear!” she said, “’twas an ill worm!

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*T H E   S E C O N D   D A Y*

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Nought could have saved thee if my leaf saved  
not  
And Nesta's faithful lips; oh! an ill worm."

In midst of Suph ere yet the season breaks,  
Between the winds a belt of calm will stretch  
Under that burning arch of day, those nights  
Spangled with stars. There idle hangs the sail,  
Dead drops the useless pennon at mast-head;  
From the deck-seams oozes the pitch, the planks  
Burn the bared foot; the sea smokes in the sun,  
And in its hot and oily glass there swim  
Strange shapes that love the warm brine and the  
calm:

Water snakes, green and gold, or ringed, or pied,  
Or mottled, like a pard, yellow and black;  
Some with sharp muzzle, some with foul flat heads  
And fiendish eyes; then monstrous sea-jellies,  
Purple, and russet, silvery grey and pink,  
With filmy oars and mouths which ope and close,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Pant their slow passage through the salt. Soon  
comes

Amidst them, as a ship through bladder-wrack,  
The great grey robber-shark, his black fin hoist,  
Like pirate's sail, and slimy belly of pearl;  
A spear-blade gleaming as it cuts the blue.  
The little fishes fly, save one bold sort  
Striped motley, with long snout, which is the slave  
And lick-plate of the shark, seeking for him  
Food, that the little fish may leavings eat;  
No shark so hungry that will swallow him.  
Along the heaving hyaline there lie  
Ropes of thick sea-grass, yellow, black, and red,  
Torn by the teeth of storms from ledge awash  
Along the coast; if we shall nearly look,  
A thousand myriad little mariners  
Die on that drifting wreck, small shell-fishes  
Who made their tiny houses beautiful;  
Strange creatures, like sea blossoms having lips  
On every leaf, that built upon the rock,

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*T H E   S E C O N D   D A Y*

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And, like poor mortals, thought their world would  
last;

Now drive they outcast with their broken house.

Oft spake we, she and I, of this strange strife  
By the high Gods decreed 'twixt life and death,  
Where living to be slain we slay to live,  
And all which Isis gives Amenti takes.

By the Seven Nameless Ones! she said a word

Wise to my mind, one morning, while we rowed  
Nigh "The Two Brothers" in the belt of calm.

Beneath that windless morning on the waves

A flock of sea-fowl seated wide and far

Made the sea white; for leagues and leagues they  
rocked

On the smooth sob o' the deep, screaming for joy  
Of living and the lust of prey. I spake:—

"See yonder gluttons of the wing and beak!

How glad and fair, yet are they murderers

Who spy huge shoals of homely guiltless fish

Hastening to spawn, and circumvent them here,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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And swallow at a gulp mother and seed,  
Father and milt ; for one day of bird life  
Destroying thirty myriad lives of fish !  
Shall this be justice here ? hath Thoth known all ?



God Melcar, and Queen Ishtar and Great Bel ? ”  
But reverently she fetched her fetish forth  
And laid it to her lips, and murmured, “ Lord !  
To see the ways of Gods await new eyes. ”

Then fell the rain storms : where the sister winds  
From north and south bring their black cloud-  
wracks up,



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*T H E   S E C O N D   D A Y*

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These meet and break their sullen swollen wombs  
With thunder and with lightning. O'er the sea  
Wasted sweet water pelts, beats down the crests  
Of billows that would rise, makes dry rocks ring  
With patter of the cataracts, and paints  
The barren valleys green. But we, aware  
Of tempests in the middle waters, hug  
The friendly shore, skirting with shallow keels  
And cunning stress of oars, where the gaps come,  
From cape to cape. One night, in the ninth moon,  
The Ram, making for beach—the sea being full—  
Took ground on lip of ledge, and shore away  
Her hither bilge-piece. When the dawn did break  
She hangs there, perilous. We lighten her ;  
We take off what we may of store and gear ;  
Fling overboard what might be spared ; with pole  
And rope put strain to free her, for she grinds  
But by the counter : yet all's nought ! the tide  
Swells near its topmost : then doth Hiram take  
His stoutest cable shoreward, kept a-dry,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Braces it twainfold three palm stems around ;  
Strains the great cord to breaking ; yet all's nought !  
Till, at the nick, when most the tide wave lifts,  
And most the Ram doth tremble, Hiram cries,  
“ Water unto the cord ! ” Young Hamilcar  
Drenches the hawser ; the wet fibres knit  
Closer by half a span ; the cable cracks,  
But the good ship swings free and comes to peace  
On quiet sands.

Now must we find afield  
Timber to mend Kneph's barque. Yet here grow  
not  
The forest trees would fit our purposes ;  
Sont only, and the Doum, and stunted thorns.  
Nathless, over the plain at foot of hills  
That to a highland climb by terraces,  
A belt of woodland darkens, green and long,  
Whereto with spears and axes and a band  
Of willing men we make a march. I go

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THE SECOND DAY

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With Lady Nesta and the Egyptian slaves,  
Handah and Gondah. Since that day the knife  
Was taken from their necks at Nesta's word,  
These had been steadfast to her service, guards  
Watching her steps and shadowing all her walks.  
An open rolling plain it was that sloped  
By rock and sand-hill and a world of thorns  
To uplands with mimosa groves and mounds  
By the wise ants built; oh! a lonely land,  
Save for the ring-doves and some speckled hens  
Which ran and cackled in the brake, and herds  
Of silk-skinned antelopes. There, mighty King,  
First did I view that creature of the waste  
Which hath two horns upon his snout, and tail  
Swine-like, and armoured plates like Gammadim,  
Eyes of the pig, and body of the steer;  
Surely in sport the high Gods fashioned it.  
For, as we bore our beam forth from the wood,  
The wild thing burst upon us, scattering all,  
And Nesta said "*Incomba*, Master, heed!

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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This is the white horned beast of Africa  
Which is to dread: stand still until he charge,  
But when he sinks his muzzle to the ground,  
Step swiftly right or left, he will not see.”  
But while it came upon us Gondah’s spear



Ham-strung the beast and when it wallowed prone,  
The blade of Handah found its heart and slew.  
So were we quit, and good meat made that foe,  
Carved in long strips and slow-dried in the sun.  
Then patched we Hiram’s vessel where the ledge  
Tore her bilge bare. It was a seasoned balk  
Shred by the lightning from a forest-king,

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*T H E   S E C O N D   D A Y*

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Untouched by worm, mended my stout Ram's side.  
So sped we thence with south-wind, gusts, and rain,  
And then, anew, calm seas whereon my crews  
By this stage fitly trained, would emulate,  
One flag against the other, ship with ship  
Racing for joy of manhood and free waves.  
With three-score blades and ten The Silver Dove  
Held easy mastership. The Ram and Whale  
More equal courses ran, and good to view  
On such gay days the oars play to the tunes  
Of flute and drum-skin sounded from bench-foot—  
Zeugite and Thalamite—above, below,  
Keeping one pulse and cutting clean the blue  
To toss it, creamy foam and bubbles back  
Along the whitened pathway of each keel,  
Where in our wakes the glistening dolphins danced.  
Thus southward, southward came we, sometimes  
held  
Captive in bay or inlet by ill winds;  
Sometimes much threatened of the coast people.

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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But we were strong and watchful; if ashore  
We pitched a camp, the place was circled in  
With thorny boughs and tree-roots and a fosse.  
All down unto the isle, of mariners  
Two only had we lost; some beast by night  
Dragged one asleep into the dark; and one  
Died of a calenture: that which is writ  
Is writ within the book of each man's life.

In the tenth moon we sailed out of that sea:  
There the great ocean opened; east and south  
The unknown world which, Pharaoh! now is thine  
By lordly primal right. East and to north  
I myself wotted of a port secure  
Into bare calcined hills gave entrance good,—  
Shamshan they name the mountain—and the town  
Which, in a cup of burnt-out fire-mount, sleeps  
Aṭtanoe.\* From the isle one day and night  
With steadfast oars and favouring breath of breeze

■ Aden.

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*T H E   S E C O N D   D A Y*

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Moored thy ships, Majesty of Egypt! safe.  
It is a friendly people; from their wells  
Hewn in the rock, we filled sweet water up;  
Bought palm fruit and great cream-white estridge-  
eggs—

For three men sharp-set one doth make a meal—  
With millet-flour and oil of olive trees;  
But mainly water; for my purpose held—  
Unspoken save to Nesta and the chiefs—  
Bold to put forth into that eastward blue  
Which had no shore I knew, nor place of rest,  
Nor help for thirst, nor food for emptiness,  
Nor shield from storm and death, till we should  
pass

Full seven-score leagues of naked waves, and view  
A great cliff rise out of that nameless sea—  
So said the coast folk—and they called that cliff  
East Horn of the Large Land where none hath  
come.

END OF THE SECOND DAY









## The Third Day

*Ithobal, pushing o'er the main,  
Reacheth a shore with stress and pain;  
Strange men and birds and beasts hath seen,  
And winneth where no man had been.*



LORY, and life, and grace from the high  
Gods

Unto Great Pharaoh! From the Ara-  
bian Shore

At end of the ninth moon we pushed to sea:  
The Ram, The Black Whale, and The Silver Dove,  
Thy ships, a goodly triplet rigged afresh,  
Well filled and fitted; for my purpose held  
To trust the deep and to be done with land,  
Till the gulf's far coast—if coast there be,  
As the sea people think—we touch a cape  
East of the mainland, if mainland there hap.  
So had I charged the water-pots and crammed

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Our jars with meal and feasted full my crews,  
To hearten up their manhood; yet none knew  
Except the captains and my lady here  
How to the winds and waves we gave our souls;  
What trackless seas we clove quitting that port  
With merry splash of oars, and steering straight  
Where none did steer before. At setting forth  
Nesta bade bring aboard of merchandise—  
Or so I deemed—a score of bales, and laid  
The goods—I thought for barter—in the poop,  
Where her sea-chamber stood. The sky was blue,  
The sun beamed glad, the silver-broidered waves  
Lisped pleasant music, and there breathed a  
wind,—

Spiced with the myrrh and aloes of the hills,—  
Which tripped our swiftest blades and drove our  
beaks

Deep in the dancing green. But when it fell,  
And right abaft us in the lonely gulf  
The sun dipped, all aflame with gold and pearl,

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*T H E T H I R D D A Y*

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Burning the brine, the lusty rowers changed  
Tired arms for fresh, and all that still night through,  
And all next dawn to noon, and after noon,  
Until again the sun gilded the west,  
Watches, by watches, they did toil. But Kneph  
Had missed a sacrifice, or Ishtar's lamp  
Gone rashly scant of oil; for while 'twas dark,  
At breaking of fourth day the morning star  
Went out behind black clouds, and a foul wind  
Drove leaping seas into our rowing ports,  
And drenched each deck-bench. Valorously the  
flute

And drum kept measure; valorously the oars  
Swung to the rowing song from ship to ship;  
Yet how shall mortal strength resist the might  
Of the angry Gods? All that long, heavy day  
We did not win a ship's length, and the next  
Hardly three leagues. Afterwards fell a calm;  
A brazen sky arched o'er a seething sea;  
A blaze of Dawn and Noon and Afternoon

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Parching my patient comrades. By the blood  
Of Thammuz! all my drinking water spent,  
My men a-dry and that shore still not near,  
Meseemed that we were lost in the outseting.

Came the ninth day whereat a hard wind blew  
Foul from the Eastward weakening what we did,—  
Too weak already. Nimroud drew his ship  
Abreast of mine; the oars clashed and our sides  
Rasped with the swell. The Syrian captain sprang  
Insolent on my deck—an angry band  
Of bearded faces round him. Heretofore  
Thrice had I chided him for hests forgot  
And deeds undisciplined. Rebellion burned  
Desperate in his eyes: “Thou Magon’s son  
Hast brought us here to perish; one day’s drink  
Remaineth, and thy fabled shore comes not.  
Send my poor rowers water; if thou wilt,  
Steer thyself onward to thy realm of dreams,  
But give us of thy store and suffer us

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*T H E T H I R D D A Y*

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To go back westward with the favouring wind ;  
Port may be reached, and those thou slayest saved."

Thirsty and lean my oarsmen gazed on him,  
Half pleased to hear, half glad to disobey.  
One little spark may breed a mighty fire ;  
Their hearts were dry for flame. Shall this be end  
Of Pharaoh's hope? I mused ; shall my Lord's will  
Wreck on one coward's raving? From his hand  
I wrested Nimroud's spear, drove its broad blade  
Deep in the traitor's breast ; stone-dead he fell  
Amid the oar-looms on the reddened deck ;  
And all the ship-folk and the rowers glared,  
And the sea idly played, tangling our oars.  
Then cried I, " Fling yon carrion overboard ;  
He dies who disobeys ; to your benches, men ! "

Yet in my secret heart sorrow kept seat.  
How make the land with dying mariners?  
Had Nimroud reason? was it well to yield?

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## THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL

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Then, at my worst, did Lady Nesta lay  
Her hand on mine, and with the other point  
Southward of east where from the mingling lines  
Of sea and sky there rose a ruddy speck  
Touched by the morning, like the golden grain  
Upon a lotus leaf. She murmured "Land!



There is thy shore—and mine!" A mighty joy  
Flooded this heart. "Thou daughter of the Sun,  
May the Seven Nameless Ones yield thee for this!  
That is my shore—and thine; yet if we row,  
These cannot follow since their jars are dry;  
In sight of prize we perish." "Nay! dear lord,"  
Quoth Lady Nesta, "give to Ram and Whale



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*T H E T H I R D D A Y*

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What drink we have, and bid them follow up,  
While I do break for Ishtar's ship these bales  
Laid in my cabin; twenty bales of fruit  
New to thine eyes. An unseen fruit it grows  
In the Arab vales; 'tis the gold apple, kept  
By dragons, people tell, in guarded groves;  
I knew and bought. I did foresee this strait.  
I feared to fail—perchance at winning-point.  
Dread not! Give them the water, and to ours  
These juicy globes distribute; bid them eat,  
Then stoutly man their oars, for the wind drops  
And 'tis from westward now the current sweeps.  
By night we will be underneath yon hill.  
And fill the water jars."

Yea! so it fell;

The Silver Dove gave to the thirsty ones  
What drink she had; the luscious fruit was sucked,  
Brightening all faces, strengthening all throats  
So that my seventy sang in frolic time

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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To music of the flute-player and the drum ;  
And, by the night, look ! we had touched a beach  
So sheltered that the sea did kiss it smooth  
With tender ripples, and a stream came down  
Out of a hanging wood, whence we did drink  
And drink, and drink, and thank the Gods for life.

We beached below the Cape ;\* a mighty rock  
Wheat-coloured, hath a sanded bay at foot,  
In shore a sandy hill ; its height I deem  
Five hundred cubits ; riseth from the sea  
Wall-like with sloping cap. Coasting along  
We skirt a yellow shore ; mimosa trees  
Marked where a stream stole out ; then, past the  
sands,

Dark broken rocks, and one brown cliff that sets  
His foot i' the waves and lifts his brow to clouds,  
Shenârif, so the fisher-people said.

Afterwards long low beaches, backed with bush ;

■ Cape Guardafui.

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*T H E T H I R D D A Y*

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Next that, an inland range wherefrom juts forth  
A crag over the breakers. Farther on  
Fresh flats of sand, and pools behind the sand  
Noisy with sea-fowl; birds that swim and wade,  
Long-legged and long-beaked birds, storks, peli-  
cans,  
Rose-plumed flamingoes, bitterns, cormorants,  
Tribes of the web and wing. To landward end  
A stream flows down, for sake of which the folk  
Had built their huts and many gardens round,  
Whom first we frightened. Never yet to them  
Had come such strangers nor been viewed before  
Garments of Egypt, or the Tyrian coats,  
Or vessels many-legged like water-flies.  
Dark hued they were, naked, or basely clad  
With belt or plaited leaves, or bark of tree,  
Their hair all shagged, dyed red. Not Nesta  
knew  
Not Handah and not Gondah what these cried  
Answering our words when we did woo them back

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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From flight to make a marketing. Yet mild,  
Peaceful of mien, dwelling in houses small  
But trim and comely. So—in need of food—  
At bidding of my lady, no man touched  
Ripe dates or millet hoarded, but we laid  
For each ship's want a motley barter down—



Cloth, and bright beads, and brass and iron  
blades—

Wares which they crave; by every heap was placed  
A stake wherefrom there swung the thing we lacked  
A fruit, some grain, meat, or a butter pot.

This done in their full sight: then would we leave  
The barter heaps a-row and stand aloof

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*T H E T H I R D D A Y*

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Whilst our barbarians, returning soon  
Meted the stuff, and laid by every pile  
The goods which they would give in equal worth.  
Then they withdrew, and ours, gone up again  
Accepting what was fair bore that away ;  
What seemed not equal we did leave untouched,  
They adding more and more to make all just  
Till both were pleased and both went full away :  
The silent market ended.

Coasting on,  
In three days from the cape we reach Hafûn  
The " Wave-surrounded." 'Tis a neck of land  
Four leagues along and two full leagues athwart,  
Broken with hillocks, edged by beaches flat,  
And to the mainland tied by slender thread  
Of silvery dunes. This doth good shelter give  
Or here or there whichever wind do blow  
To fisher-folk who—for the fish abound—  
Drag their rude shallops to this side or that.

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Myself, because the north-east wind blew strong  
Bade Sothës, Hanno, and wise Hiram row  
Round the long neck to where a little bay  
Lent certain peace. There did we cast our nets  
And took much finny food, but the great sharks  
Would ofttimes break our gear: the negro boys,  
Handah and Gondah, taught our Tyrians  
To slice their fins and dry them in the sun  
For broths, since out of evil cometh good.

“Where goes my lord?” the friendly people asked;  
And I, “We go as far as the sun goes:  
As far as the sea rolls; as far as stars  
Shine still in sky; though they be unknown stars.”  
Then they, “What seeks my lord?” I gave reply,  
“To find for mighty Pharaoh what his world  
Holds hidden.” But they did not know thy name  
Great King! and softly laughed, and said “Who  
hunts

What the Gods hide hath trouble for his pay.

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*T H E T H I R D D A Y*

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Many have gone thy way, and some came back,  
But lean, and grey, and broken; and they told  
Of savage men, and dreadful suns, and wastes  
Where snake and lizard die o' the scorch, and where  
The shadow of a man at high noon falls  
Between his feet unseen. And if there lay  
Some pool under a rock, if some stream flowed  
With welcome water, all the beasts around  
Sniffed it, and stamped it foul, and sucked it dry;  
While lions prowled and roared." "Nay but we  
go,"

I answered, "'tis commanded." Then they spake  
Pointing black fingers west of south, "Go then!  
But keep thy ships aloof from Mabbar there—  
We name it 'Stand-off Point'—lest a storm break  
And trap thy vessels in the stony bay."

But Ishtar favoured, and thy Gods, O King!—  
Soft o'er the wooded neck a morning wind  
Bellied our sails; a cloudless sun arose

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Turning to gold the Dove upon my stem;  
To gold the milk of the waves, to gold the foam  
Flung from our oars, which—bank by bank—made  
    play

As those three keels raced gaily. At moon-rise  
We saw the pale surf fretting round the head  
Thrusting and thundering into cave and cleft  
With echoing moans, and hiss of shingle dragged:  
By Isis! 'twas a place to break a ship  
With a ship's company! But we sailed wide,  
Holding the friendly breeze, and all that night  
And all next day—day of the eleventh moon—  
Merrily sped the Dove, and Ram, and Whale;  
My lusty oarsmen drowsing in the sun;  
The drum and flute at peace or striking up  
For frolic dance. In the warm air was taste  
Of life, and joy, and hope, grown breathable.  
Then did I know, dread King!—my painted sails  
So filled, my lady's hair blown for a sign  
Straight onward, and the faces of my men



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*T H E T H I R D D A Y*

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Set to the look of such as fear no more—  
Then knew I that we should not fail. The barks  
Danced till the sunset down a rugged shore  
Where ran a wall of rock, till with last gleam  
We spy a red cliff; on this hand and that  
A saffron-tinted pinnacle; behind  
A darkish round-capped hill. From forth a gorge  
A river rills to sea; about its mouth  
Huts cluster of the shore folk. After parle  
By sign and broken speech, we make fair friends,  
Let fall the sails, and beach.

In the dry time,  
This stream, the people said, scanted and thin,  
Hath hardly flood enough to brim its bar;  
But now we filled our jars at the sea's edge.  
Around my ships, under a grove of palms,  
A fence was fixed, by forty spearmen kept;  
But we had peace. Soon, from the mountain  
gorge,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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A caravan appears of inland folk :

Swart merchants clad in bark, rude fighting bands,  
With shields of hide, and knives, and knotted  
clubs ;

Slaves with the yoke-wood on their necks, and  
trains

Of laden oxen, camels, horses, eke,

A breed not seen before ; marvellous steeds

Striped as a melon is, all black and white :

Flanks, muzzles, necks, and hams, pencilled and  
pied

Like a silk cloth of Saïs ; these they said

Ran wild behind the hills, but being broke

Made gentle drudges. Goes a road, they told,

Into the land, whereby these traffickers

Wend and return, bringing their country stuff,

And taking back what wares the coast affords.

An easy path, they said, by Nogal vale,

Well watered and the forests dark and cool,

Whence we might pass, if we did will to pass

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*T H E T H I R D D A Y*

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To certain goodly game-lands in the hills  
Where, for the hunting, meat in plenty roved.

So—lacking meat—with twenty chosen men  
And porters of the village; Hamilcar  
And I, with Nesta, kept the company  
Of the home-going merchants. First a cleft  
Where the pent river fretted in its rocks  
Glittering to light 'mid dripping ferns and fronds,  
And diving into darkness where the path  
O'erhung its bed. So marched we half a day  
While the stream sang cool music in our ears;  
And then beyond the pass a wood; great trees—  
Their boles, O Pharaoh! bigger than the shafts  
Which front thy palace,—and with buttressed roots  
Grew over dark green solitudes, and raised  
A leafy roof that noon's sun might not pierce.  
No undergrowth, no grass, no blooms,—for those  
We saw the butterflies:—by Isis! lord!  
Thou hadst not missed the flag-flower, or the lote,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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The blood-red granate-bud or palm blossom  
Nor all thine Egypt's gardens, viewing there  
What burning brilliance danced on double wings  
From stem to stem, or lighted on the leaves  
Blotting the grey and brown with lovely blaze  
Of crimsons, silver-spotted, summer blues  
By gold fringe bordered, and gemmed ornament  
Alight with living lustre. One, all pale,  
The colour of the sunrise when pearl clouds  
Take their first flush; one, as if lazulite  
Were cut to filmy blue and gold; and one,  
Black with gold bosses; and a purple one,  
Wings broad as is my palm with silvery moons  
And script of what the Gods meant when they made  
This delicate work, flitting across the shade,  
This breath a burning jewel, at the next  
With closed vans seeming like the faded twig  
It perched on, or the dry brown mossy bark.  
"See!" Nesta cried, "he hath a side for love,  
And life, and joy; for foes another side,

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*T H E T H I R D D A Y*

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Lest they who hate him slay him : Master dear !  
It is the law ; life is a brittle loan,  
Who makes good usance of it doeth well,  
But without craft and wit this cometh not."

Round the great trunks, with deadly strict embrace,  
Caressing them to death like strumpets fair  
Who kiss to kill, the long lianas climbed—  
The giant creepers—snakes among the plants,  
Winding and winding till they come to crown,  
Then spread their lightsome leaves and poisonous  
fruit

Bold in the sunshine. There four-handed folk,  
Monkey, and ape, and marmozet, long-tailed,  
Fur-bonneted, black-maned, with mocking eyes  
And old men's faces, chatter, scream, and crack  
The painted bush-rat's nuts, or filch from bees  
Their hoarded honey. Here some serpent-vine  
Hath choked its tree ; the strangled trunk is down  
Mouldering to dust, and the wise elephant,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Pacing the wood as though a black mount moved,  
With ponderous tread, breaks the proud ruin up  
And is not 'ware. There from some lower limb,  
In the green twilight, hangs the giant worm,  
Monstrous and mottled, with a bloomy sheen



On chilly gold and purples gleaming, tail  
Knotted upon the branch, the lithe, small head,  
With devilish eyes, and black, forked, slimy tongue  
Swings like an innocent spray till there shall pass  
With dainty hoof the unwitting antelope—  
And then—hell gapes!—the swift coils cling and  
crush:

'Tis forest murder, as the Gods ordained.

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*T H E T H I R D D A Y*

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“ See! ” murmured Nesta, “ here was one whose  
foot

So swiftly sped that ere the dust of it  
Had time to settle she was out of sight :  
And here is one, the python, huge and still,  
Drags sleepy coils on the slow-measured earth ;  
And yet the swift is slain, the sluggard feeds,  
Because 'twas so decreed, and the law stands,  
That lives, by lives, pass unto other lives.”

After the forest came an upland. Here  
The trees thinned out, the river spread its bed,  
By waving reeds and watergrass in flower  
On each bank margined. Yet another day  
Through thorny bush, high grass and aloe-spears  
Our march led, till a path turning to hills  
Bent southward. Then we quit our caravan,  
'And come, by climbing, to a table-land  
Spreads wide and wide, with thorn trees scattered  
thick

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Far as the eye could see. All silently  
We thread a thicket; at its verge, our guide  
Bids gaze; and lo! Great King! such sight to view  
As did amaze my Tyrians and me.  
Gracious the scene was: Syrian hills are fair  
With golden crocus and the rose-laurel  
And scarlet lilies every silver stream  
Enamelling; and goodly Egypt shews  
With palms, and temples, and its waving grain.  
But here a great park spread so bounteous  
For grass and grove, for rock and rippled stream,  
For shade and sunshine, for its swards and sands  
And far off bordering of dim blue hills,  
It seemed to be a garden of the Gods,  
Where we had pushed unwelcome. For that plain  
Was peopled, Pharaoh! not like Saïs here  
Nor thy royal towns—with thronging citizens  
Nor built upon with walls nor set with streets;  
Rather a populous city of the wild;  
A sylvan capital inhabited



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THE THIRD DAY

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By creatures of the fur and hoof. In troops,  
In herds, in hosts, they pastured on the green,  
Scoured o'er the flying sand, ran merry rings  
For sport, or joy of life, or amorous play:  
A thousand myriad beasts! beasts of all breeds  
That mead and forest rear. Some may men see  
Even by Nile, and some were never seen  
Till so we broke into their pleasaunces.  
Only the Lady Nesta knew their names:  
Antelopes, pied and spotted; antelopes  
Like great white bulls and cows; black antelopes  
Horned as with spears; and one, purple with cream,  
Having striped shanks, dropped flanks, and ass's  
tail  
And four soft horns;\* striped horses, beasts which  
bore  
Bull-necks and limbs of deer; great armoured pigs  
With horny snouts; and long-necked estridges  
Flapping black wings. But most of all, I marked

■ The okapi of Sir H. H. Johnston.

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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That mighty wondrous brute, theretofore seen  
Only in hieroglyphs at Ombos, tall  
As thrice my stature, dappled like a pard,  
Yellow on white, with long, wide, shambling legs,  
Hoof, tufted tail, sloped withers, stretching neck  
Four cubits long, having flesh-horns on head,  
And limpid eyes. The gentle monster grazed  
In tree tops, with a dainty lip and tongue  
Culling gold balls from the mimosa bough.  
I would have spared, but those with Hamilcar  
Slew it, and stripped the hide, and lay it here  
To be thy carpet. Other beasts roamed there  
Countless and curious; shaggy lions, lords  
Of field and forest, held, in solitude,  
Their savage court apart. Grave elephants  
Swung past in stately files; grey river-hogs  
Grunted for roots: the painted leopard laid  
The roses of his golden coat at rest  
On the forked branch. 'Twas like another world  
Whereto men come not and the beasts are kings.

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*T H E T H I R D D A Y*

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Yet we lacked meat, and soon with spear and bow  
From those fleet foresters our hunters drew  
Tax for the ships. But that same day thy slave  
Had perished, ere his purpose could be won,  
Save for my lady and the guardian Gods.  
While we did follow on the trail of game,  
At entry of a thicket, Nesta cried:  
“ ’Ware, O my Life! I see a sign of fear:  
A spotted wolf has crossed us to the left,  
And twice the eagle-owl doth warn me back.  
This path is dangerous—ah! have a care.”  
But I, hot with the chase, went heedless on  
Sighting my quarry and, with shaft on string,  
Was striding fast when, following faithfully—  
Her light foot never weary, knowing well  
All woodland marks—Nesta did seize my gown,  
And whispered, “ Master, look! notest thou not  
Yon grass across our path hath not its hue  
Of native green? Why grows it sere and bent?  
Why lies it shaped and smooth? I pray thee fling

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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This great stone at the place." Why I obeyed  
Hardly I know, but hurled the fragment there,  
And where it struck the false earth opened wide,  
The lying swards sank down; gaped a big pit,  
Black, deep, and steep, dug in the hunting path,  
Set thick with sharpened stakes—the wood-folks'  
    way  
To snare their food;—so did thy servant 'scape.

Next pushing from the shore with favouring wind  
We sail across a bay to "Serpent's Head,"  
First of three cliffs, planted like towers in the  
    sea,  
Sundered some half ■ league. Then,—for the  
    moon  
Lighted our way, and the night airs blew kind,—  
Down a long desolate land our galleys steered,  
Where nothing showed, no clustered huts, no  
    glow  
Of hunters' fires, or village torch, or gleam

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*T H E T H I R D D A Y*

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Of shallop's sail, or paddle of canoe.

Only wild rocks, by scorching suns burned bare,  
Under the moonbeams grey and black; thick  
bush

Edging the tawny sands, wherefrom we heard,  
Commingling with the moaning of the surf,  
The roar of prowling lions. 'Tis a tract  
They call "the low shore"; by thy life! a place  
Hard and unlovely as Amenti's gates.

Nathless when fell the night-wind all three ships  
Manned oars and rowed with will; for we were  
fresh,

Rested, well fed. So all day long those blades  
Tripped to the music of the flute and drum  
Over the ocean floor; and jocosely  
Rower from rower took the sweat-stained oar.

On evening of third day when we were spent  
And evil weather lowered southwardly,  
I seek a cape, juts friendly to the sea,  
By two small islands shielded, where we find

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Fair shelter, and make commerce with a tribe  
Of peaceful fishers.

Then, by hanging crags  
And rock-strewn beaches, with a range to north  
Of towering mountains, we do skirt a coast  
They name the Uplands. Outside on the main  
The waves roll high, but under reef and shoal  
Quiet paths help us till the great sea sleeps  
And once again by moonlight, wafted on,  
Without an oar we passed Sharôti's huts;  
Sail down beyond a black hill hung with woods;  
Till moored at Attelet, where long reefs lend  
Good shelter-spot, we wait the northern winds,  
Which, gently breathing, bring us plain in view  
Under a hill, a rock, shaped like a sail  
Seeming to round a castle-fashioned crag  
Washed by the surf.

Still speeding on, we come  
Beyond Shangâni and a shallow bight

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*T H E T H I R D D A Y*

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To Merka, on a sandy mount. And here  
A pilot from the savage people told  
The coast-names and the course to steer. At eve  
By Brawa he would have me take the Dove  
Outside the reef which gave to Ram and Whale  
Good refuge, saying that my ship "rode deep."  
But at the southern end a current brake  
Against the wind. The channel we would seek  
Boiled with a sea-race. If right on we hold  
The rocks must take us; if we try the gap,  
Short wavelets, breaking angry, drown my ship.  
Already hardly can the rowers keep  
Their benches, and the curling brine bursts in.  
I was at loss: I cried, "The oar-ports plug!  
Make fast the hatches! Come, for your lives, to  
deck!"

When Nesta, at my side, fearless and calm,  
Whispered me, "Master! no sea-lore have I,  
But on our great sweet waters twice and thrice  
I have beheld a strange thing done at this

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Which ended well. Suffer thy servant here  
A little of her will." At that she turned  
Where, at her cabin entry, swung a lamp  
Lighting the image of her country's God  
Done grim in gold and ivory: for whom  
By night and day she fed that flame. The lamp  
Held of the sunflower oil two measures full;  
This did she seize, and with her lithe strong wrist  
Flung it to windward. By thy life, O King!  
Soon as that oil did fall upon the sea  
It mingled, spread and widened in a film  
Of diverse colours which enchained the waves  
Breaking their crests down, flattening what was worst  
And hardest of their rush; so that no more,  
Tho' 'twas at roughest in the middle race,  
The green hills leapt on board: scarcely one crest  
Wetted our deck; my galley safely steered  
Into the channel: Nesta with her slaves—  
The two Egyptian handmaids kneeling here—  
Laughingly tying up her sea-drenched locks.



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*T H E T H I R D D A Y*

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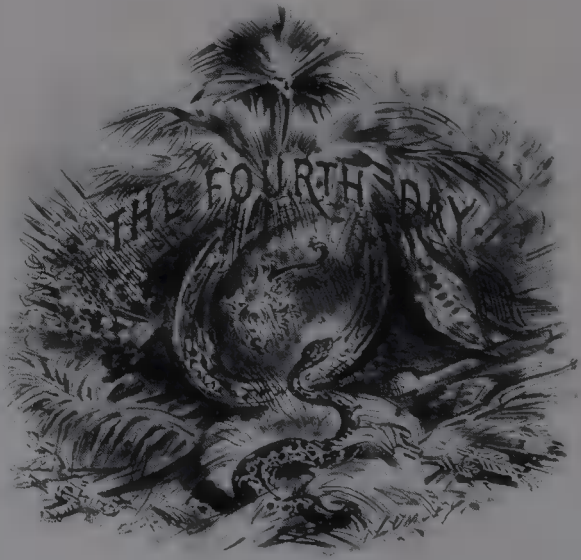
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So came we, nothing harmed, down all that shore,  
Ever inside the reefs, skirting a land  
Was all red stone and bush, and hanging shelves  
Of sand and rock which took the ceaseless rage  
Of tumbling billows, in a noise and spume  
Terrible, deadly. Yet the Silver Dove  
Flew straight and sure, till at a river's mouth  
We entered glad. The black folk name the stream  
Juba. The place was good : we rested there.

END OF THE THIRD DAY







## The Fourth Day

*Ithobal sails the Unknown Sea  
Where divers gestes and merveilles be ;  
He hath a dream on Afric's strand  
The meaning strange to understand.*



AY the King live in greatness, peace and strength!

May he have favour of the Awful Gods!

Thus far, O Pharaoh! were thy vessels come  
By sailing of six moons; in sooth so far  
There was another land and sea and sky.

Think not thy servant's tongue a lying tongue  
If he shall tell thee that while we put south,  
Day after day, and night succeeding night,  
Close-clinging to the shore, or, with fair winds,  
Scudding from point to point, the stars ye know  
In Egypt's dark and in the murk of Tyre,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Which go around the North Star and around,  
And have their seasons fixed to rise and set:  
All these sank low and lower in the sea  
Astern of me. And Ishtar's Star sank down  
Deeper and deeper towards the leaping waves  
Till, where we camped at Juba, look! it sate  
No higher from the margin of the main  
Than shines thy pharos at the mouth of Nile.

Moreover, as we measured league by league  
Of multitudinous billows and long coasts  
Forever leading south as if this Earth  
Stretched edge to Sun—nay! and beyond the Sun—  
For, mighty Pharaoh! where our camp was pitched  
Yon orb which rolls in gold through Egypt's sky  
And at his highest—even in the Crab—  
Here southwardly doth set—that self-same Sun  
Blazed northwardly and went to setting north,  
And rose in the northern east;—I say new stars  
Week after week sparkled into our sight;

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THE FOURTH DAY

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New skies; new constellations: Oh! a world,  
A heaven, unviewed by any Mage or Seer,  
Unnamed by Soothsayers, Astrologers—  
Our eyes the first to watch its gleaming swarms.  
Brightest of all there grew up from the waves—  
One moon before the Star of Ishtar sank—  
A wondrous light,\* four splendent orbs so ranged  
As are those four great jewels on thy breast  
O Mighty Pharaoh! with one smaller star  
Like to thine emerald button, holds them back:  
A breastplate, target, or a cross, might be,  
Its shape nigh to four-square: we steered by it  
When the North Star went down and helped no  
more.

The river runneth seaward 'twixt low banks  
Of tufted sand; men may not find its mouth  
Passing aloof, unless one guide the eye  
Like our black pilot knowing well all signs;

■ Southern Cross.

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## THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL

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And, at dry time crafts cannot enter there  
By reason of a bar where great waves burst,  
Would wreck tall ships. But when the river brims,  
And sea swells full, galleys may make their way  
In quiet weather to the peaceful stream  
Flowing a bowshot broad 'mid sandy flats.



Here huge scaled crocodiles drowse in the sun;  
And mangroves, glossy-leaved, whose arching roots  
Are populous with creeping things and fish,  
Breathe forth at sunset poison. Yet, inside  
Strong mind I had to stay and fill my ships  
With meat and meal, and learn where we had come



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*T H E F O U R T H D A Y*

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And what the peoples were, and if, beyond,  
Lay secrets hidden for my lord the king.  
Long parle, and perilous we held; their chiefs—  
Bedecked for battle, clad with lion skins  
Or monkey-fur or spotted leopard's pelt—  
Sat fierce along the beach, their warriors  
With spears, and shields of hide, and bows, and  
clubs,  
Waiting for word of peace or war. I bade  
My trusty Tyrians gird their swords; we stood  
Ten-score stout men who knew not fear—with  
those  
Aboard, sufficient guards. I would not brook  
From the wild men ill-dealing; but my guide,  
My star of women—Nesta—murmured me:—  
“Suffer their ways a little, 'twill be well;  
They do consult their Gods.” Thereat she used  
Strange words seemed sweet to them; but these  
beat heads,  
In sudden reverence on the sand, and clasped

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Hands across breasts as though a Goddess spake:  
Then brought their sorcerer—a painted priest,  
Hung with men's bones, and teeth of snake, and  
beads,—

Who, with dark arts, and magic mumbled spells,  
Plucked, from ■ basket near, a cob of corn;  
Laid it on earth, then grovelled, moaned, and  
writhed:

And where the corn was, look! a little snake!  
Whereat the savage people yelled for war.  
But Nesta spake again; then took a shaft  
From Gondah's quiver; laid it on the earth,  
Drew from her breasts the little amulet  
Which helped her at her prayers; and, clasping  
this,

Bowed down over the arrow. When she raised  
That fearless visage, lo! no arrow there!  
But a long, glittering, green, lithe serpent hissed,  
Which seized the sorcerer's worm and swallowed it.  
Then the wild people shouted loud, "Peace! peace!

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THE FOURTH DAY

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Peace with the strangers!" And they bring much  
gifts

And kiss the fringe of Lady Nesta's gown,  
And lay their foreheads on her feet; whilst I  
Made question of my mistress whence her craft:  
But she, her lips set firm, softly replied:—



" My silence steads thee better than to tell;  
Things seen are not so true as things unseen;  
The Gods are with us! be content, sweet Sir!"

Thereat we took the ships in. From the hills,  
Thirty days' journey off, the river came  
Broad, lined by canes, with deep pools interspaced

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Where the great river-horses rolled and washed  
And strange things stole to drink,—the water-buck,  
The long-faced hartebeest, quilled porcupines,  
Crooked-tusked wart-hogs, sable antelopes,  
The grey sagacious elephants, and he,  
Who roams tyrannous lord of all the woods,  
The tawny lion. And there flocked strange birds,  
Bustards, and many-coloured doves, and kites,  
Waders, and fishing-fowl, and birds with ears,  
Which slay the lizards; and another, calls  
The hunter to the tree where honey hides.  
Here a whole moon we moored, and beached our  
    keels,  
And freed them of sea-grass, and hacked away  
Sea-shells, and brine-rust from the bilge. We made  
The leaks all good, with juice which flows like milk  
From wounded trees, but dries to pitch, and binds.  
Also we mended well what was amiss  
In hull and gear, and roped our sails anew;  
Re-stowed the holds, and laid for ballast there

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*THE FOURTH DAY*

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Millet, and sesamum, and shark-flesh dried.  
Alack! I lose upon the channel here  
Five of my faithful ones; a river-horse  
Seized in his massive jaws a shallop's side;  
Crushed the frail boat, and of the six within  
Only did Sothës 'scape. And twice in sleep  
The crocodiles dragged down a Tyrian.  
Then fever took my crews; some score had died  
Till Lady Nesta taught us where to find  
A herb was bitter, with a lance-head leaf  
And purple blossom; and the broth of this  
Did surely cure. Whilst the ships lay at rest  
We rode the river upward until rocks  
And headlong rapids stayed us. Was a town  
Of peaceful naked folk, set in a grove  
Of nut trees:—'tis a stately, gallant growth,  
Will yield you twenty-score for food, or give  
The sweet tree milk in its own ivory cup.  
The town was walled with thorn lest lions snatch  
Sleepers by night, or enemies assail;

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Or those four-handed tribes, the long-tailed apes,  
Steal the ripe nuts. There came a caravan  
Of traders from the hinder-land ; we spake  
With their chief peoples. Wonderful to hear  
Their stories of the secret world beyond.  
Fifty days' march inland—a mount they said  
Lifts its long ridge a league-high to the air,  
'And hath forever in the burning blue  
'A crown of snow. And yet beyond, vast seas\*  
Shut in the hills, where one might row and row  
Eight nights and days and not reach nether shore.  
Moreover, from this mighty hollow flows  
A broad strong river, leaps in thunderous fall  
Down a vast steep: then runs north—north—aye!  
north—  
Whither none wotteth. O my lord the King!  
Maybe this is the fountain of thy Nile!  
Not Lady Nesta knew ; her country lay  
Far off—far off—she said ; yet she had viewed

■ Victoria Nyanza.

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*T H E F O U R T H D A Y*

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Wide inland waters; had heard speech of men  
With tails, of pigmy men dwelling in woods;  
Naked, dust-coloured, using poisoned shafts;  
Of men that lived around a towering mount,  
With changeless cap of snow, who ate their kind,  
And made dark sorceries.

We put to sea  
Scantier in company, but well refreshed,  
Refitted, good for toil, glad to steer on  
Whither the Gods might lead and thy great will.  
Yet of the coast-folk none would sail with us  
Save one grey ancient knowing of the bays  
And lacking for his withered belly meat.  
“Ye go,” they said, “to death! there is a way;  
We wot the road; but not how to return.  
Best die in daylight: not in night and hell.”  
Still we stood forth; fair ran the rippled sea;  
New-painted on its wavelets shone the ships;  
Under our stems, like birds before a plough,

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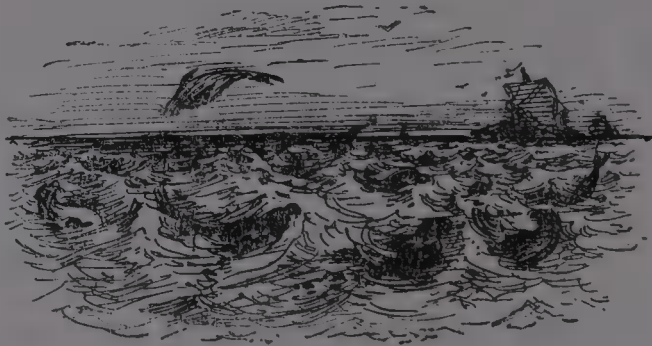
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THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL

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Over the silver furrows flying fish  
Darted in flocks; white sea-birds, wide of wing,  
Soared round our masts, and screamed for orts;  
    before,  
Behind us, gambolled dolphins, glossy-black,



Pearl-bellied, mocking with their speed our oars.  
Full fed, by friendly winds favoured and moon,  
Down a long coast we scudded, rimmed with sand  
And then red hills; and, by the daytime, isles  
Crowding along the sea: in shore of these  
The rolling waves ran low. We passed flat reefs  
Where sea-fowls nest, and sleek seals drowse i' the  
    sun,



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*T H E F O U R T H D A Y*

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And then a rock, washed all around by waves,  
Built like a citadel; one would believe  
This spot a fortalice, planned for some war.  
Afterwards the clouds lower, storm portends,  
Shelter were well. My dark-skinned pilot points  
Where two white patches on a sandy hill  
Mark refuge; 'tis an island, thick with huts,  
Fringed with the mangrove-tree, who loves to dip  
Her feet in the salt. An inlet opens fair;  
Our oarsmen strain to reach it; while the sky  
Begins to blaze with lightning, and the sea  
Blackens beneath the thunder-clouds. My Dove  
Guides Ram and Whale into a still lagoon  
Where we ship oars and praise the Gods anew.

'Tis seen that mercy breedeth love, O King!  
My lady had for maidens, damsels twain,  
Bond girls of Egypt, Asenath and Seet,—  
Who tended her and tired her hair. Goodwill  
Had grown between the mistress and the maids;

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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For Nesta was born gentle; and no soul  
Near her, but joyed in sunshine of her smile.  
The maids to bathe betook them in the creek,  
Swimmers of Nile, glad of their water-play;  
Laughing they clove the milk-warm evening wave  
In strife who should be first to bring to deck  
Blue lotus-buds; and Nesta from the ship  
Beat her soft palms to cheer them. Presently  
A glitter of grey light beneath the green!  
A black fin cuts the water! Nesta cries:—  
“A shark! the shark!” and then her countenance  
I first saw fall; for, ’twixt the maids and ship  
Steered the fierce murderer of the deep, aware  
Of his sure prey; and they, aware of him,  
Bent anguished eyes on their pale mistress there.  
Death if none helped, death unto him who helped!  
Then with set lips my mistress uttered word,  
Half prayer, half mandate, and those Africans  
Whose necks she saved from knife of Tyrian  
priest—

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*T H E F O U R T H D A Y*

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Saw—understood,—and for sweet duty's sake  
And love of her kind eyes, did this, O King!  
A lance-head lay on deck, barbed at the point,  
The shaft new sharpened for its ashen pole  
A cubit long. Gondah strips off his gown,  
Grips the sharp steel, and rolls the cloth around,  
Leaping into the sea; so Handah too  
Holding his fighting-knife. With this the boy  
Strikes at th' attacking fish, who hath in front  
Young Gondah swimming. Savaged with the  
stroke,

The monster turns to seize; opes his fell jaws,  
Toothed terrible, forgetting what he sought,—  
Those naked maidens. Look! the fearless boy  
'Tween jaw and palate of that dreadful beast  
Thrusts the wrapped spike. The murderer closes  
down

The cruel mouth, but hath a bridle fixed  
Will ride him to his death. Mad wallows he  
While Handah stabs and stabs. All impotent

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Rolls the baulked fish into the crimsoned depths:  
The maids come trembling home. But Gondah's  
arm

Was gashed from wrist to shoulder by those fangs:  
Mortal I deemed till Lady Nesta dressed  
The deep-cut wounds and laid some simples in,  
And bound all with fine linen, fair and spiced;  
While at her feet the crouching African  
Gave his life, ten times over, with his gaze.

Asquat upon the deck, munching his grain,  
Mine ancient conned the galleys southwardly;  
A low coast on the left, then close to shore  
A yellow island, Manda; this we skirt  
Since the black pilot saith, "Lamu lies nigh,  
Where water is, and goodly markets meet."  
At Lamu presently we moor; a town  
Set on a long, low isle of silver sand,  
Fronting a river's mouth—"Ozi" 'twas named—  
The people friendly, liking well to trade.

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*T H E F O U R T H D A Y*

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We buy of sim-sim, in their bags of mat,  
Plantains and nuts, for linen cloth and beads.  
“Whither go ye?” they ask. “We go,” I say,  
“As far as yonder coast goes stretching south;  
As far as yonder ocean thither rolls.  
Know ye the road?” “The end of it we know,”  
They answered; “it is darkness—it is death;  
It is where lives that God who suffers not  
That others live; whose name, to utter it,  
Would make the thunder speak and the rains fall.  
Yet hence a little space the road is good,  
Ye shall come soon to islands of the sea:  
M’vita that hath fair harbours, Leopard’s Cape,  
Malindi; then Oyambu’s creek and huts;  
And after M’vita, looms the Isle of Spice—  
Pemba; and then the great rich Monkey-Isle—  
Zangue, where ye may find men to show course  
Nearer and nearer to what goal ye seek  
Outside the lawful waters. As for us,  
We will die where our fathers lived and died.”

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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We beached at white Malindi; coral reefs  
Break the grey billows ere they reach the sand.  
Northward, a sandy bluff; behind the beach  
Fan-palms, with flat crowned thorn-trees, and a  
plain  
Of goat-grass and ilook; innermore stands  
A range of hills. There was a cavern here  
Carved in the soft stone by a stream that broke  
Out of the woods; and bowered fair and green  
With climbing flowers and plants that love the  
moist;  
And hanging canes, where golden lizards glanced  
And bright sun-birds, like living jewels, sucked  
The honey blooms. Outside, the blazing day;  
Within, cool gloom, and soft, clean cushions spread  
Of silvery sand. Its peace invited us—  
My lady and thy slave: for noon was red,  
And we had wandered far, glad of firm Earth,  
New from unsteady footings of the decks.  
At entrance I did lay my shoes aside,

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*T H E F O U R T H D A Y*

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And hung my cloth on spear ; who enters then  
Unasked, must die : it is the Libyan law.

I fell to slumber in that cavern, King !  
And had strange visions. In my sleep I saw  
A Queen of stately stature, dark of hue :  
Dark, but most comely : oh ! a form and face  
Exceeding beautiful ; the black, curled hair,  
Clustered on shining brow and velvet nape  
In such wise that no diadem was lacked  
To grace its jetty glory. Yet the head,—  
The sovereign head in majesty supreme—  
Albeit touched with sorrow, touched with shame—  
Wore a great crown was beat of burning gold,  
Bordered and bossed with jewels such as Thou,  
Lord Pharaoh ! keepest not in Treasure-House.  
For round its rim and on its circling bands  
Mingling with moony pearls had robbed the sea  
Of all its choicest wealth—glittered great stones  
Of sard and amethyst and lazulite,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Turkis and sapphire, beryl, jasper, jade,  
With rubies red as doves' blood, chrysoprase,  
Lucent as light of Spring, and adamants  
Which shut the dayshine in, and flashed it forth  
Like little suns. And on her shapely arms,  
Dark as the date's stone, softer than its bloom,  
Great armlets hung of hammered gold, set close  
With emeralds and coral. Round the neck,  
Carved like thy porphyry columns, black and  
smooth,  
A gorget, all of hammered gold, was clasped;  
In shape a slave ring; and the sweet strong breasts,  
Two hills of ebony entopped with rose,  
Were crossed and braced with the slave's shoulder-  
straps  
Done all in burnished gold. The Queenly One  
Lay, in a leopard's skin enwrapped, whose sheen,  
Dappled with night-black rayings and rosettes,  
Clung supple to the lovely waist, and took  
The bendings of her beauteous limbs. Her hands,



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*T H E F O U R T H D A Y*

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Moulded for force and tenderness, to grasp  
Shaft of swift spear, or coy a lover's cheek,  
Were manacled together with rude grip  
Of golden chains. And the fine feet of her,  
Carved of black alabaster,—nobler made  
Than ever Goddess yet in shrine or fane  
Had worshippers to kiss,—shook when they  
moved

Links of a tinkling slave-chain wrought in gold.

Thus bound she lay, this goodly youthful Queen:  
And only by her eyes—wonderful eyes,  
Full of disdain, half conquering her despair;  
Full of despair, half banishing disdain;  
Lighted with pride and pity, sufferance, rage—  
Knew I she lived. Her prison seemed a land  
Vast, various, gilded from the North to South  
By always shining summers; rich with plains  
Of arable and tilth: with orchards grown  
Where birds and deer were gardeners; with woods

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Where giant trees made mansions of green light,  
Peopled by unknown tribes; with rivers born  
From horns of flower-clad mountains, lifting high  
Shoulders of snow into the burning blue,  
Taking their fruitful way through valleys, fair  
With blossoming reeds and floating lotus-buds  
And feathered waving canes, and then made pools  
In bosom of their hills, which were like seas  
So wide from coast to coast. Deserts were there,  
Dry barren deserts where the spotted wolf  
Findeth no drink but blood; and antres deep  
By ill-folk habited; and poisonous swamps  
Where none might pass and live. The wilderness,  
The waste, the marsh, the barren upland scrub  
Where wild beasts rage; these things did lie around  
That prisoned Lady's bed, shutting her off—  
Or so I deemed—from help and humankind.  
Yet there was help, for at her girdle swung,  
Thonged to its perfect work of beaded seeds,  
Two keys of gold. As if by some two locks

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*T H E F O U R T H D A Y*

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Which these might open—were there friendly aid—  
Way would be found to set that bound Queen free;  
To give her lovely life and mistresshood,  
And all for which the Gods had fashioned her:  
So rich, so beautiful, so noble! Nay!  
One bar did let and hinder! Round this land  
Ran two wide borders, blue, immense, profound;  
Beset with dreadful perils, hard to cross,  
Long to unfold, which must be nathless crossed,  
Must be unfolded,—this way first, then that,—  
Ere the sweet Queen could rise.

And then, dread Lord!

I saw the silver dove of Ishtar light  
At those sad, captive feet, as when it drew  
Mine own steps to the slave-bazaars in Tyre;  
And in its beak a sunflower seed, which means  
“ I follow, follow always ”; and I heard  
Murmured from that most sovereign mouth the  
words,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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“Ithobal, son of Magon! succour me!”

And I,—“But how, most Noble?” And she sighed,  
“With ships, thou Tyrian! And with these gold  
keys.”

Then seemed I once again aboard; yet ah!

What waste of waters! what mad whirl of waves!

What dreadful rocks! What shores that slide and  
slide

Out of the blue of sky into sea’s green

And back into the blue; and never cease

And never turn, or turn only to show

New coasts that trend north, north and always  
north;

Till the strayed sun, that set upon our right,

Dips on our left again; if we come live

To the ocean-gates I know and come with ships.

Yet in my vision, King! I had but two.

Moreover, Lord! I dreamed strange sequent  
dreams.

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*T H E F O U R T H D A Y*

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Years rolled, and reigns and generations. Nay!  
Thy realm had passed: thy piercing Pyramids  
Had melted into bluntness with the suns  
Of sweeping centuries. Yet, while those sped  
Folks found, it seemed, the imprisoned Queen and  
brought  
Some help and homage. In my vision shewed  
Men in white garments, Arab men who bore  
Money and gifts, taking away for these  
Ivory, and gold, and slaves, and spiceries.  
And there rose kings, black lords of flattened face  
And iron breasts, who ruled the tribes by blood  
And kept what peace they knew. Then at the last  
Strange mariners I saw sail from the West;  
Their chief of noble bearing, bearded, fierce,  
With galleys four came downward on my track,  
And round the dreadful Cape and put to north,  
Where I had southward rowed and southward  
sailed;  
Until in this same cavern where we lay

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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I saw him stand and gaze towards the port  
Where his bruised fleet did anchor. Then I heard  
The imprisoned Queen sigh,—“Ithobal of Tyre,  
The blue wide barrier hath been rended twice!  
The sea’s stern girdle falls away from me!”

Yet did my vision hold. White faces came  
More and more frequent through the perilous belts,  
The thirsty desert, the enfolding hills,  
The murderous tribes, the lion-haunted wilds,  
The slave-paths, and the burning villages,  
To where the Lady dwelled. But prone no more!  
No more in chains! She sate upon a throne  
Carved out of tusks and gold, with jewels decked,  
Draped with her own royal robes: the sweet proud  
eyes

Gleaming with joy and grace of fresh life found;  
While Ishtar’s dove cooed, and my dream was done.

But Nesta laid her face between her palms,  
And bowed her head, and kept long silence. Then

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THE FOURTH DAY

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She lifted on me look of tenderness,  
And spake these words: " Master! be comforted!  
Thy dream is good and true, and giveth thee—  
What the Gods may—to see drawn back the veil  
Hiding the things that will be. These will be!  
Long, very long hereafter they will be.  
She whom thou didst behold chained and alone,  
Sore-suffering, shut away from love and hope;  
She was my AFRICA, my darkened Land,  
My hid, forgotten Land; whose child I am,  
Whose lover; and for whose sake I have lived  
To be thy mate and guide. Her days begin!  
Ithobal's ships, much-daring, shall break through  
The sea-bars—blue, immense,—that hemmed her  
in;  
And there shall come to her adventurers  
Seeking her gold—for that is how the keys,  
Fashioned of gold, feign way t' unlock the gates.  
And with gold-seekers shall go merchantmen,  
And tramp of many caravans; and trade

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Which, pushed with blood, shall end in peace and  
wealth.

Nay! Stay!" she said; "also I see that one  
Who doubleth back on this sea-track of thine,  
And cometh hither to our very cave

Twenty-one centuries hence: a western chief,  
Iberian, swart and brave: the voices say  
His name to me in Greek: I wist not what;  
I wot not why: but they bid write it so."

Thereat,\* on the white sand, with lids shut close  
And slow-moved finger, this mark she did trace

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I know not and she knew not wherefore thus!  
But 'tis a letter of Æolians.

A little while she paused; then from her breast  
Drew forth the precious amulet of gold

\* Nesta foresees Vasco di Gama, who did visit Malindi.



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*T H E F O U R T H D A Y*

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That helped her at her prayers, and clasping this  
Dropped o'er her face her headcloth; lay awhile  
Cowering and crouched: then she spake once again:

“ This is a high deed which Thou doest, Lord!  
Mother of many deeds! Past thee and him  
And those who follow, and the acts to be,  
And the long patience of the waiting Gods,  
I see my Land with Sister Continents  
Sisterly seated: her dark sons I see  
From wars and slave-yokes freed. These sunlit  
shores

Happy with traffic, while a thousand ships  
Sail on the waves first clove by Ithobal.”  
This was my vision, Pharaoh! in the cave.

South from Malindi ran we with soft airs  
Breathing off shore; so did I let all drive  
Over warm waters, under scorching skies  
To the green island Pemba, where we lay  
Safe anchored in a shallow gulf, was lined

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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With spice-brush and the pale green aloe-spears  
And the wild tree-wool; for a hard wind came  
Hot from the south, and far away at sea  
Pillars of cloud and water passed; storm-whirls,  
Which with fierce rage and furious roar upore  
The heavy, rolling billows, flinging them  
In scud and spume into the tortured air,  
Which howled and twisted till the heavens seemed  
    brine,  
Hiding the sun. In such a water-spout  
My galleys had been as the gnats that drown  
Where Nile leaps wildest. But our sailors burned  
Sweet incense to the Sea Gods; and next morn  
The tempest spent its wrath, the loud winds lulled;  
Lightly we set from Shâki, steering straight  
For Zangwe—'tis an island, great and fair,  
Sitting along the coast; with downs and woods  
And harbour looking to the sinking sun  
Where we made port, seven moons of voyage done.

END OF THE FOURTH DAY





## The Fifth Day

*Ithobal, ever sailing South,  
Enters at many a river's mouth ;  
Through fair and foul ; 'mid joys and woes  
Unto the land of gold he goes.*



HEALTH and longevity to Egypt's King!

The Mighty Pharaoh! May the all-  
seeing Gods

Grant thee good peace! We lay at the great Isle  
Till the moon filled her sickle to a shield ;  
Then, heartened, sailed again into the South.

How oft we beached, how oft we crept for fear  
Behind reef-wall ; how oft—save for Kneph's help  
And Ishtar's mercy—we had seen our ships  
Splintered on savage cliff or lurking rock,  
Or by huge hissing billows overwhelmed  
'Twere long to tell, nor good, O Lord of Lords!

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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For patience of thine ear. Still southward rolled  
The unbroken coast, white, yellow, red, or brown,  
Rugged with headlands, rounded with low dunes,  
Beached with black stones, or silvery sands, or belts  
Of the mud-loving mangrove. So we passed  
Upanga's bluff, and where the low shore holds  
"The House of Peace": Sinda, Koronjo's reef,  
Kutâni's ruddy wall, Mafia's Isle  
With angry breakers fenced; Rufiji's mouths  
Where Sea-cows live,\* which have a tail and fin  
And fishy forms: yet—I lie not, O King!  
Breasts of a woman and give suck.  
We spy Mirambe's brow and, o'er Kirinje's huts,  
Long flat-topped hills. Then the tall nut-trees wave  
On Songa. Thence athwart two shallow gulfs,  
Nondo and Kuvu, unto Lindi's stream—  
Good watering;—and hard by, the Mushroom  
Rock,  
Madjovi. So through Mnazi's sheltered smooths

■ Manatee.

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THE FIFTH DAY

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To where Rov'uma pours into the green  
Her turbid flood, with blood of many a slave  
Foul mingled. Then the Kongo Cape we round,  
Which seems an island as one sails from north;  
And slip, well-pleased, from storm and savage seas  
To timely shelter of the foam-washed reef  
Fronting its shore.

These were the names we heard  
Of pilots, fisher-folk, and merchant-men  
Trading the marge with shallow feeble craft,  
Ill-rigged for evil weather; yet their seas  
Well known to them, and here they bid us mark  
The giant current \* of mid-ocean,  
Part itself like a branching stream of earth,  
To flow this side and that. Next Ulú's Isles,  
Majumbi's coral crags; and then, in swarm,  
Islets,—Kerimba's archipelago;—  
Imo and Fumo, and their sister rocks

■ Great Equatorial Current.

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Perilous of approach; next, seven sharp hills  
Over Arimba; Pomba Bay behind  
Lent friendly haven. Skirting Pardo's point  
Dark hillocks show in the bush; follow steep slopes  
Rich-wooded; then a hill, lofty and white,  
So shaped that one might deem, coming from north  
'Twas a great galley of thy Nile at sail.  
Afterwards, under lee of Mozambik, we rest,  
Well-covered. For a fierce wind drew  
Betwixt the main and certain sea-girt land  
Whereof they spake, towards the rising Sun,  
A mighty Island.\* Being calmed, we rowed  
Across Mokambo Bay, and lay awhile  
In Mluli River where within the mouth  
A green isle towered,† inhabited by apes.  
By thy Soul! Pharaoh! even thou hadst smiled  
To watch the grave-tailed elders of the troop  
And monkey-mothers with their furry babes  
Viewing thy ships approach; hardly less men

\* Madagascar.

† Monkey Island.



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THE FIFTH DAY

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Than those who pushed from shore with food to sell  
On log or light canoe. 'Twas at the close  
Of the eighth moon we oared from Kilimàn  
And came by rosy bluffs and running hills  
To where the deep sea darkened to the flood  
Flung by a lord of rivers, broad and deep,  
Far draining from the inland.

'Twas a stream \*

Vast as thy Nile, dread King!—Luâbo named—  
Coming adown from distant hills and lakes  
Through full five hundred leagues of wild and  
wood,  
And falling to the salt by many mouths  
With black groves fringed, and barred by shifting  
sands.

Yet, with full sea, and patient watch, a ship  
May happy entrance find. We lowered sails,  
And on the broad green rollers oared our way,

\* The Zambesi.

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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By ample channel, to the upper pool  
Where the great river rested, ere it gave  
Its tribute to the main.

Under a tree

Smooth-barked, with slender leaves, whose massive  
trunk

Ten of my Tyrian rowers, clasping hands,  
Could not encompass, we did set the camp,  
Thorn-girt, well guarded, for the folk were rude,  
The country troubled. Yet these eyes have seen  
No fairer, King! for sylvan majesty  
And wonder of the works the high Gods mould.  
'Twas the beasts' home,—man came a stranger  
there.

If one did wander on the river's marge  
A world of forest creatures stole to sight.  
The bush-pig squeaked; the wart-hog, in the  
reeds,  
Grunted and wallowed; shaggy buffaloes

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*T H E F I F T H D A Y*

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Cropped the young grass between the ant-hills;  
deer

Mottled and dappled, darted through the brake;  
Bush-buck, and water-buck, roan antelopes,  
And sable antelopes; and o'er the open waste  
The stately elands roamed, with bearded gnus.  
The kudu snorted from the thorny flat,  
From waving marishes where bitterns fished;  
And river-horses bathed and crocodiles  
Dried their grey bulk i' the sun, and with cold eyes  
Blinked for their prey. Yet was it wondrous, King!  
These would not slay their friends! A spur-winged  
bird

Ran frolic o'er the monster's scaly spine,  
And from his frightful jaws picked water-lice,  
While round his couch of slime the painted duck  
Sported; flamingoes preened their rose-red wings;  
The great grey herons slept upon one leg;  
And all those river things had peace of him.  
Such is the jungle law; yet, if a doe

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Timidly tripped to drink, if careless slave  
Drew nigh to fetch of water; look! a rush  
Of that live log! a snap of rending teeth!  
And peace was broke, and the stream bloodied.

Turn

Into the grove of green mimosa trees  
Gilt by ball-blossoms, and we heard the doves—  
Bright plumaged, with the jewelled necks, and  
feet

Sandalled in red—coo love from branch to branch  
Forgetful of the falcon on the crag  
And fierce king eagle circling in the blue.  
The crowned cranes stalked about the silent pool;  
The snowy egrets fed; the sacred birds  
Of this thine Egypt—the staid Ibis—paced;  
From hollows of the towering trunks by pairs  
The horn-bills brayed; from purple bunch to bunch  
Of the wild vines starlings—gold, ruby, blue,—  
Sparkled; and coloured finches piped and pecked;  
Small busy weavers built their hanging nests

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*T H E F I F T H D A Y*

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To spite the robber snake, whose stealthy coils  
I' the dead leaves glistened.

With a chosen band  
Of fearless ones, and followers from the tribes  
We mounted—three canoes—the splendid stream



Many days rowing. For the people said  
High up was sight of marvel—spot they named  
The “Smoke that Speaks.”\* Sometimes with pad-  
dles plied,  
Sometimes with cords, we made a perilous way  
By gorge and rapid where the strong flood raced

\* Falls of the Zambesi.

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Through rocks all foam, and hanging boughs;  
sometimes

The channel sobered, and then came to ear  
From far aloof a murmur, night and day,  
Like whispering thunder. Now we quit the boats;  
Strike through the forest; march three days—the  
noise

More and more filling all the air with roar  
Unspeakable,—and, where the forest clears,  
Away over the tree-tops hang great clouds  
Lighted to golden white under the sun,  
Thick black against the moon-beam. At the end  
My band steps forth upon a level place  
Fronting the dreadful glory. King of Kings!  
Ithobal knoweth not to tell this sight!  
The river—broad as is thy Nile in flood—  
Comes from the nameless lands, green out of blue,  
Comes from its purple hills, majestic, brimmed,  
Its tide of silver quickening as it feels  
The awful abyss draw. A long, low isle,

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*T H E F I F T H D A Y*

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Whereon the moist airs breed a lavish growth,  
Cleaves it in twain ; then, as if loath to part  
And mad to join again, the sundered halves  
Plunge o'er the edge. Seemeth as if they hung  
Fixed in their very leap ; a curl of green—  
Green as the light that strains through fan of  
palm—

Sits constant on the dizzy precipice  
Down which the splintered river rages. See!  
Just here the earth hath opened ; the torn rock  
Gapes to a night-black chasm, lit above,  
Deep-black, death-black below. From this boils up  
A steamy smoke as if Amenti there  
Bubbled and raved ; and with the smoke the sound  
Of a whole sky throbbing with thunder-blasts.  
Sheer over rim of cliff, half a league long,  
Into this hold of ravage and of wrath,  
And flying spume, and murk impenetrable,  
Dives desperate the river, dives adown  
Three hundred cubits, if I judge aright,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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And wildly mingled in its cauldron there,  
The broken monstrous masses lace and lock  
And ramp and rear ; then bursting forth to light,  
Go tossing under rainbows and wet rocks  
And shuddering leaves, into a narrow gorge  
Crosses athwart their course, scourging their rage  
Into fresh-leaping furies ; till this bulk—  
Come from the fountains of a continent—  
Gains room to calm ; and in wide reach below  
Slackens its sparkling angers, stays its speed,  
Clears from its waves the bubbles and the spray  
And, placid once again, lord of itself,  
Goes bright and gentle to the awaiting vale.

'Twas tenth moon since the starting from thy  
shores,

O King of Kings ! the light half of the moon.  
At ebb we dropped to sea by western mouth  
Of vast Luâbo—Lady Nesta guide—  
For on that river there had lodged with us



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*T H E F I F T H D A Y*

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Men of the upper country, merchant-men,  
Tall and of comely visages, with garb  
Richer than wont. Whose speech, when Nesta  
    heard,

I marked her great eyes brighten, and her lips  
Half-open as to utter some glad word ;  
Yet did she hold her peace, of counsel wise.  
But afterwards in private, clasping hands,  
Whispered me thus: " Heart of my heart, dear  
    Lord!

I spake thee true, telling of lands I knew  
Outside all lands and seas beyond all seas ;  
And how, in tender years, they tore me thence  
A captive girl, the daughter of a King ;  
And how by long, long journeys I was borne  
Northward and north, entreated tenderly  
For reason I was meek and fair to see :  
And how in those ill days, my sad eyes saw  
The darkness and the anguish of my Land ;  
Till night by night I dreamed of one should come

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Fearless and masterful, with ships and men,  
And find us out, and break the bonds of Hell  
And be beginning of a glorious dawn.

Lo! this hath fallen: those within our camp  
Come from my country. What they speak is  
speech

Of her who suckled me; of him who died  
Fighting to save his folk. They know me not,  
But bear good news, unwittingly. The Prince,  
My brother, ruleth. All his land is still;  
The pastures full of kine, the markets brisk,  
The caravans eager to come and go;  
And that which in thy home men most desire,  
Thy priests, thy lords, thy kings, Pharaoh himself,  
The gold,—the rich red gold,—is boundless there;  
Glistens in river-sands; gleams in the rocks;  
Is as a common dross. The road thereto  
Wends by a river, running to the sea,  
Fifty short leagues from this the Sabi named.  
Thou hadst desire, I know, some port to find

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THE FIFTH DAY

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Where we could plant our grain; and, while it  
springs,

Careen thy ships, and make an enterprise

To win by traffic some commodities

Worthy of Pharaoh's feet. This is thine hour.

Sail unto Sabi or to Pungwê's mouth—

For those are neighbours—beach thine emptied  
hulls:—

Fill them, refitted, with the harvesting

Of wheat and barley. For what still remains

Of this hard voyage, stretches vaster yet,

More difficult, more dreadful than what's done.

Yet shall we at the last attain. Dear Lord!

Follow my counsel. I will show the way

To where a goodly ballast shall be got

For Ram and Whale and Silver Dove.”

With that

I launched and set to sea, ten moons being spent.

In days twain, and one night,—the currents fair,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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But the breeze foul from south,—we made the  
stream,

Pungwê. The coast lies low; a sloping beach;  
Then thickets; and, 'mid these, sandhills which rise  
Shaped like thy pyramids. The tide, at spring,  
Lifts my three galleys lightly o'er the bar  
Into broad placid waters where a point  
Lends certain shelter. Like a wall of waves  
The flood comes in, filling the creeks and nooks,  
And, draining forth again to sea, lays bare  
Flats sudden and sharp spits, whereon you spy  
The idle crocodiles drowse in the sun;  
The river-horses wade forth of the deeps;  
And turtles crawl to scrape a nesting place.  
Here it is well to be: we strand the ships;  
Build the stockades; and open busy marts,  
Where the shore-people, swart, and clad in skins,  
Bring of their victuals, taking wares from us.  
Thereon my Lady hath devices:—shears  
The wool from Gondah's head; pricks on the scalp

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*T H E F I F T H D A Y*

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The token of her tribe; when hair is grown  
Sendeth him with a knot of trusty ones  
And native people, bearing curious gifts,  
Northward along the river; while we pass



By easy marches. The boy's one message was,  
Clip me and judge me by the sign."

Then too  
I owe again this life—my King's and mine—  
To Nesta. On a day we meet in parle  
Chieftains and warriors of a warlike breed,  
Questioning passage, asking weighty tolls.  
We sit in circle on the river's brink :

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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They with their spears, my men with sword on  
knee,

And there pass angry words. But soon one brings

Wine of the country, brewed of millet seed,

Heady and sharp, served new in woven bowls

Of grasses; and the foremost black of them

Signs that I drink, with many a peaceful nod.

Whereat my watchful Mistress craftily

Drops in the drink a leaf—I know not what:—

Leaf of some flower, which withers, spits and turns

Dull black. I marvel, but she murmurs “ Lord!

He hath not drunk; ’tis custom that they drink

Before their guests.” Hereon I bid him quaff:

This vile one waxeth ashen; yet I bid,

Sternly entreating. They put by the bowl,

Baffled and anxious. As it standeth there,

A village hound, unnoticed, laps the stuff,

And, in a little, rolls its eyeballs, gasps,

And falls, all foam and spasms, on the sand.

The lying friendly draught was venomed! King!

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*T H E F I F T H D A Y*

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My heart grew hot: I clove the traitor's head  
From crown to chine. Shouting, the tribesmen  
rose

And fled: there would be war. Five days and  
nights

Swarmed they and buzzed like wasps around the  
camp,

Shooting their shafts, firing the grass, intent  
To slay us if they might, and spoil our stores.

On the sixth day,—we, being sorely pressed,  
Half a score Tyrians slain, with camp-followers,  
Water cut off, and valiant Hamilcar

Hurt in the thigh,—rings from the hills a blast  
Of conches, a beat of drums; long fighting lines,

With spears and shields, show brave upon the ridge,  
Who shout their battle-cry and leap adown,

In files and painted squadrons, to the plain.

Our foemen hear and fly. First of the host

A youthful chieftain, clad in pelt of pard,

Whose mounture is a striped horse of the wilds

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Caparisoned in gold, rides nobly forth  
With guard of well-armed men. Before our camp  
He doth dismount: a herald, feather-girt,  
Advanceth, crieth phrase of peace. But, look!  
My Lady Nesta bids our gateway ope,  
Paceth serenely forth: only her maids  
Attending—Seet and Asenath. She strips  
The gemmed cloth from her silk smooth shoulder:  
See!

Branded in red and white upon its round  
A lizard:—'tis the mark Gondah's skull bore  
Beneath his wool. Which when the comely Prince  
Views, he cries lustily, like one distraught  
For utmost joy, and giveth loud command,  
And claps his palms hard, flinging first his spear  
After those fliers. Nesta, drawing nigh,  
What noise! what tumult! what mad ecstasies  
Of pride and pleasure! 'Twas their Princess come  
Home out of bonds and darkness. Where she  
trod



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*T H E F I F T H D A Y*

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Those fierce ones kissed the earth; to touch her  
gown

Was honour: for the Prince and all his tribe  
Well knew the Makalanga lizard: sign  
Of "Children of the Sun." Their clamorous glee  
Scared the lean vultures perched upon the slain.  
We were delivered and the road lay free.

Then marked I how my Lady's words came true:  
Red gold grew here. Was hardly one of all  
But had it for the apple of his lance,  
Or pommel of his sword, or wore it bossed  
On shield or sandal, or in burnished rings  
On neck and wrist and ankles. At their feast  
They served us broth and stews in golden pots.  
Roast game lay on gold dishes. 'Twas as bronze  
In Egypt, or as brass in Sidon's streets.  
For where this river issues from its hills—  
Wonderful granite hills, fantastic, weird,  
Mightily cragged and cleft—the white rock holds

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Gold in great veins; sooth! 'tis a land of gold.  
Ugambe—'twas the Chief's name—made me learn  
How his gold-workers delved. A deep shaft sunk  
Some twenty cubits to the mother-bed,  
And there this cunning hoard of nature hid  
To tease and draw mankind! I did descend  
And crept through cavernous ways and gloomy  
gates

Till we were come to a great chamber hewn  
In the mid hill. There, lo! all round about  
The soft gold glittered to the torches' flare  
Out of its milky stone: sometimes in films,  
As when they press the purple: sometimes flaked  
Like glass; or spun like threads of silk; or pouched  
Massive in pockets; or in branching lines  
Like moss that grows in chinks, if moss were gold.  
This rock, wealth-bearing, patient hands break out  
And bring to air. There, slave-gangs set in rows  
Pound with hard stone on stone the veiny stuff,  
Crushing it small. This first they wash and sift

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*T H E F I F T H D A Y*

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For the great pieces ; afterwards they roast  
What's left in furnace till the gold runs clear  
Caked in the ash : so is their way with gold.

Wherefore, great Lord ! because this thing is much,  
And maketh wealth of the world and pleaseth  
kings,

And doth befit ev'n Pharaoh, it behoved  
To guard the prize for thee. King Suleiman  
Owned ships and men that brought him gold from  
Punt

And peacocks out of Ophir, and fine gems.  
Thou, too, mayest have—shalt have—Lord of all  
Lords!

Thine Ophir in this region where we came  
Empty, and whence we journeyed, turning back  
After a six moons' sojourn,—rich enow  
To buy the fleets of Tyre, if 'twere thy will.  
For here the gold was dross ; the friendly folk  
Laughed at our lust for the pale yellow yield

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Which will not fashion head of spear, nor blade  
Of hunting-knife, nor wear a lifetime through  
As iron armlet doth or ankle ring ;  
And bore no worth they said, save to be soft  
In working and to take no rust. With that  
Gladly they bartered it for beads and cloth  
And whatsoever gear we had to give,  
Of Syrian, or Egyptian. Nay, for love  
Of Lady Nesta, and to honour guests,  
They did bestow with gentle show of pride  
Platters and bowls cast out of shining gold,  
Pouches and girdles, fillets, amulets,  
Neck-rings, and head-rings: so our caravan  
Marched seaward from the hills with twelve-score  
    slaves  
Gold-laden, and another followed it  
Or ever we set sail; thus I did fill  
The Black Whale's hold with that rich ballasting  
From keel to floor. I sent thee back that ship  
So freighted as was never craft before,

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THE FIFTH DAY

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Dunnaged and stowed with gold. Sothës had charge.

I filled him with our rice and barley, raised  
In two crops by the river; bade him press  
Northwards for Suph, making his benches up  
With slaves of Sabi. "When thou seest," I said,  
"The star of Ishtar lift i' the north anew  
And reachest where we crossed that ten days' main,  
Cleave to the coast till thou beest come to Suph;  
Then enter by the island, and stand north  
Till Pharaoh learn of thee and thou canst void  
Thy cargo on the carpet of his throne."  
Thou knowest, King of Kings! thy ship came home  
And Sothës stands beside thee, who did bring  
The Black Whale back, and from our silence, news.

Moreover, that these opulent fields be kept  
Secure for thee and us, I made a pact,  
Solemnly sealed with strange and ancient rites—  
Confirmed by drinking blood and slaying goats—

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Whereby the golden hills devolve to thee  
Around the springs of Sabi. Thirty men  
Among the Tyrians, skilfullest to build,  
Stoutest to fight, best helps at every need,  
Joyous in dangers, eager for high deeds,  
I chose from out my rowers. These should take  
Wives of the country, raise their dwellings, till  
Sufficient earth for food—slaves serving them,—  
And of the thirty, under Hamilcar,  
Each should be captain over maniples  
Of three-score warriors, drawn from bravest blood  
Of Makalanga. Then, to make all sure,  
They must have fortalice to hold the hills  
And guard and delve the gold. I did ordain  
There should be reared—where the rocks favoured

us

And much fair water bubbled—structures twain  
Which the wise Hiram did devise and plan.  
Of these the foremost was a hold of war,  
Massive, impenetrable, made to bear

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THE FIFTH DAY

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All shock of battle, as the sea-cliff takes  
The battering waves and turns their idle dash.  
I bid them build it, where the broken crags  
Gave coign and traverse and good vantage ground,  
On forehead of a granite mountain scarped  
Three sides. Along the fourth, to rear a wall  
Shutting out all but birds. Within the wall  
The stronghold, circular, with rounded ramps  
Of hewn stone, laid ten cubits thick; the doors  
Narrow, and giving entry by strait ways  
Where but one man could pass; and those strait  
ways  
So blocked with buttresses and ambuscades,  
With cunning corners, fighting-holes and pits;  
So from the walls above commanded, that  
No foe could win alive from gate to fort,  
Or shun deaths showered upon him. In the midst  
The unfailing fount, good storage for the grain,  
Space for the men-at-arms, fuel for food,  
All deftly schemed. In time of peace my men,

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Housed in Zimbabwê's groves, the guards at hand,  
Would dwell serene and win the gold. At war,



Safe in their citadel, ten thousand foes  
Could count as ten.

Beneath, on lower slope,  
Wise Hiram drew for me a House of Gods—  
Ishtar's and Bel's—; was to be built to lodge  
The Lords of Heaven most nobly; all of stone  
Heedfully shaped, like Babylonian bricks,  
Faultlessly squared; was to be oval-framed,  
Cubits eight-score and eight the longer way;



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*T H E F I F T H D A Y*

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Walls thick cubits fifteen, high, twenty-one;  
And, crowning all the walls, should run a row  
Of Ishtar's birds cut of the soft green rock,  
With those high sacred pillars interplaced,  
Which mean the Sun, and Life, and Love, and  
Death

And things men tell not of. Also those walls,  
Laid to a hair's breadth, fashioned close and fair,  
Nicely obeying what the Gods enjoin,  
Should so stand, pierced with window and with  
door,

That at due time the Northern Stars we knew  
Should through each chink let shine their holy light  
On altar-slab and graven stele and floor;  
So that men mark the seasons, and the days  
Of fast and feast. And Hiram schemed to build  
Patterns upon the wall, with chosen stones  
To such a point and such; a fish-bone course  
Which meaneth what ye wist; and on south-east  
The zigzag pattern, sign of Water Stars

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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And of the Many-Breasted. These would show  
The Solstice, when the ray of rising sun  
Touched first this brick or that. Inside its walls  
The House of Gods should spread a spacious court,  
By narrow doors and by strait ways approached,  
Where, if he would, with five-score fighting men  
Hamilcar might withstand the land in arms;  
And, if they would, in days of peace, the priests  
Might on due altars, and in close-shut shrines  
Pay Gods, and eke the Seven Nameless Ones  
Homage and worship. The sites we set;  
Handselled the quarries; hired the meaner sort  
To chip and square, for all must be dry work,  
No binding clay or lime, lest seeds blow in  
And saplings, rooting in the joints, should grow,  
Rending its face. But this when all is wrought  
Shall stand as the eternal mountains stand  
Unchanged, and tell the centuries to come  
How Hiram builded on Zimbabwê Hill.

END OF THE FIFTH DAY





## The Sixth Day

*Ithobal, reaching the world's end,  
A spacious harbour doth befriend;  
Southward no more, but Northward now  
Turneth his storm-tossed vessel's prow.*



GLORY and length of days, Great King, to  
thee!

The High Gods give thee victory and  
peace

And all thy heart's desires! The ship I sent  
Came to thy coasts—her precious freight unspilt—  
After nine moons: so hadst thou tidings, Lord,  
Writ thee in gold from Ithobal, thy slave.

I, with two galleys launched, my Ram and Dove,  
Stood southward yet again. Hiram abode  
To build, and Hamilcar to keep the guard;  
While, for those thirty Tyrians sent ashore

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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And lost ones in my crews by land and sea  
By water or in battle, by wild beasts,  
Or slain by sun, or sickly marish airs;  
As many from the native folk I took,  
Freemen and slaves; well-moulded ones, enured  
To toil and trial. Some with Hanno filled  
The empty benches of the Ram; and some  
Joined service in the Silver Dove. We quit  
The friendly river, well caparisoned,  
Stuffed to the wales with stores: sails renovate,  
Cordage new-coiled; masts, rigging, all a-taunt:  
And those brave spirits that did wend with me  
At this by danger's salt so seasoned down;  
So wont to take the terror and the sport  
With equal mind that, if the end were death,  
Then death should be good port. The weaker  
ones,  
In such stout company, lacked time to fear:  
Sufficient if they followed Ithobal  
And Lady Nesta; if their daily mess

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THE SIXTH DAY

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Came warm and comforting when oars were  
ranged;

And on the deck or beach, in noisy dance,  
Their feet kept time to the drum.

Yet we were come

So far, Lord Pharaoh, that it frightened me!  
What had befell the Sun? Thy Spring on Nile  
Is Autumn at that bound: thy Winter here  
Shines Summer there: for this my thought was ripe.  
Well wot our Tyrian mariners that Bel  
Goes through his constellations, moon by moon,  
From Ram and Crab to Fishes. But, dread King!  
Already at Zimbabwê, in its sky  
Of fiercest weather, overhead the Orb  
So swung that either shadow was not cast,  
Or cast to southward; and when week by week  
My keels still ploughed those never-ending fields  
Of the wine-coloured main; still clomb the slopes  
Of glassy waves, to plunge forever down

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Through the sea-lace and spume ; still saw the shore  
Glide, ghostlike, shadowy, grey, interminable,  
Bound by its girdle of a beach, or walled  
With dreadful crags; and while the last stars  
dipped—

Of those we knew—under the rim ; and stars  
Nameless, fresh to our eyes flashed into ken,  
The heart of this thy servant Ithobal  
Melted ofttimes to water. Twice and thrice,  
Lone on the poop, I beat my breast and cried:—  
“ We come too far ! ”

But, never once dismayed,  
My Lady kept good courage. “ Thou,” she  
laughed,

“ Captain of all the Captains, sailest here  
Farther than what was Nesta’s farthest ; yet  
Sound are thy Ships: the sky hath still its Sun,  
The winds come fair: thy willing rowers go  
Whithersoever thou dost steer. I saw



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*T H E   S I X T H   D A Y*

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Our Silver Dove of Ishtar on the stem  
Thrice stretch her bright wings in this morning's  
    gold,  
As hungering for what glory never bird  
And never vessel found before. Sweet Lord!  
Hold thy great heart! The coast doth know itself;  
Its simple people pass, repass and talk:  
Keep heart! I have a thing to comfort thee.  
Less than five hundred leagues will bring us where  
The long shore bends; and, trailing south no more,  
Goes by a mighty horn, a Cape of Storms,  
Laved with a wave that rolls from the World's End  
Westward beneath a flat-topped mount, then turns  
Northward and north and north, thy homeward  
    way."

So sped we onward all those weary leagues;  
Now fanned by airs which hardly broke the blue,  
Now scourged by storms which rent the ocean  
    floor,

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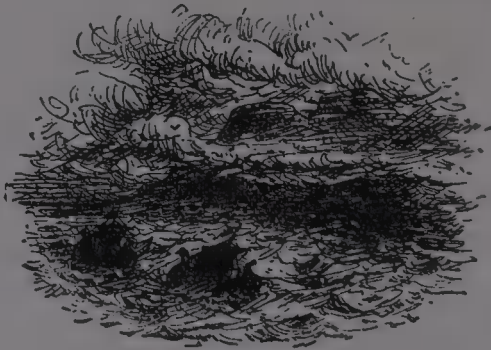
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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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And drove its hissing hills, all flake and foam  
In headlong wrath. Anon, 'twas breath of Heaven,  
As if the Gods had thereabouts trooped down,  
By golden stairways of the clouds, to dwell  
'Midst their own weather in such Paradise



Of dimpled sapphire wavelets, whose white lips  
Kissed the smooth Shore and jewelled her with  
shells.

Then, whether it were life or fearful death  
Waiting beyond for us in that dropped veil  
Of the sea's distant purple none took heed,  
None scanted meal nor did forego his song,

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*T H E   S I X T H   D A Y*

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His dance and music: since if this were Fate  
Sweet were it so to end. Anon, 'twould seem,  
In tempest, or the terror of the surf  
Bursting beneath our lee—so close we saw  
Our grave-place in the rocks—as if Hope died  
In gloom behind us, and in face of us  
Despair did point to Hell. Yet not for that  
Was any oar-loom dropped: was any thigh  
Thrust at the bench-board with less manlihood.  
From chief to slave, ship-boy to timoneer,  
These gave their souls with me to what so keeps  
The souls of brave men safe. In pleasant times  
The songs that Egypt hears, or Sidon sings  
Kept our blades dancing. On the evil days  
When we must run for shelter, not the winds,  
Piping outside the reef where we would hide,  
Could howl my children's cheering down.

Thus, Lord,

All those five hundred leagues of unseen sea

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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In forty days thy galleys overpassed,  
Till, sailing free, a light air from the north,  
Daylight just dim, we see the unending coast  
Break to the right, away, far, far away:  
Ahead, no land at all. The wide sea rolls  
Steadfastly westward, in long hills and dales  
So that with steep ascent we climb, to glide  
By slope as steep into the trough of blue:  
So deep ship sees not ship until they ride  
Once again balanced on the curling crest.  
No land to south, nor east; westward we spy  
White beaches and grey cliffs with hills behind  
And forests hanging in the clouds. All day  
The strong swell helps the wind to waft us on  
Till there was brought abreast a wall of cliff,\*  
Dark-hued, three hundred cubits tall—a peak  
Pointing each flank. O Pharaoh! now I know  
That rocky ramp with its twin peaks on guard  
Was of all Africa her utmost earth;

\* Cape of Good Hope.

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*T H E   S I X T H   D A Y*

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Was back-gate of the World ; was where to turn,—  
If the Gods willed—to find a homeward way  
And come alive out of that nether death.

Even as we drew inshore, the sun went down  
Far on our right : no man had seen that thing  
In Syria or in Egypt.    Crouching low  
My grey-haired steersman hid his face and  
          prayed.

But Nesta, holding fast the golden charm  
Which helped her with her Gods, laughed low and  
          said :—

“ Master ! we have out-travelled even Bel !  
The Sun-God is more weary than thy ships :  
He sleepeth short of us.    And see ! where stalks  
A tawny lion on yon grassy knoll  
Hanging above the surf !    Know ye that sign ?  
It is the Lord of Libya come to look  
On men that have a heart within their breasts  
Greater than lions.”

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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As she spake, the clouds,  
Gathering tumultuous o'er the distant ridge,  
Stooped and let out a blast from forth the West  
Full in our faces, driving down the swell,  
Tearing its grey crests off in seething spray.  
And with the wind the hail—great stones of ice—  
That pelted decks and scourged the smarting sea,  
And beat the billows flat, bringing amain  
A new fierce turmoil of such waves as seemed  
Each one a ruin. All our sails were furled;  
Deck-hatches shut; fast-sealed the rowing-ports;  
While our two banks of Thalamites in turn  
Strained blades to keep us heading. If we  
    broached,  
The seas must come aboard, the o'er-whelmed craft  
Must founder. Never saw thy servant yet  
A deadlier run of breakers; by His name  
Who dwells at Ascalon, I did not hope  
To view another sun; but—more to cheer—  
Myself I seized the steering oar and held

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*T H E   S I X T H   D A Y*

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As best I might the Silver Dove to the wind.  
Surely we had been lost, when Nesta plucked  
My sleeve, and pointed where aboard his Ram  
Good Hanno showed us safety. Not in vain  
Summers and winters long on the Mid Sea



The salt had bleached his hair ; the savage deep  
Taught him its secrets. Axe in hand he cut  
His mast and gear away ; lashed round the wreck  
His anchor rope, and, casting overboard,  
Had veered the raffle forward through the waves,  
And making fast on the stem-head, he rode  
Secure by this sea anchor, whose defence

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Broke the rough brine and kept the gallant ship  
Steadfast to windward. We, too, likeways did,  
Cutting away our mast and launching it  
With sail and gear and rigging over side;  
Till, like the Ram, at cable's-end the Dove  
Hung, plunging to the angry wash, sore tossed,  
But saved. Thus did we drift the wild night  
through,

And all a dismal day, and that next night,  
Till morning brought us peace, with promise fair  
Of easy shelter; since a spacious bay\*  
Opened its green arms for us to the left;  
Whereto, hacking away our wreck, we stood,  
Much labouring, for the sea ran strong; and faint  
Were hearts and arms, yet life is sweet to save,  
And this my lady on the bench by me  
Plied the same oar-loom with her dark small  
hands,

What time, with cries of joy, the two ships shot

\* Table Bay.



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*T H E S I X T H D A Y*

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Clear of the surge, under a shelving hill,  
Which shut us into quiet.

'Twas a spot  
Stamped on the tablet of my soul by stress  
Of utmost peril finding end in peace.  
From head to head the gateway of the bay  
Spreads a large league. An island\* to the east  
Sentinels that approach; inside a plain  
Where one might build a stately city, King!  
To keep the keys of all that Nether World.  
Beyond it soars aloft a mountain mass,  
Flat at the top like some prodigious roof,  
This side and that side ending suddenly  
With precipices sheer, which plunge adown,  
Till from their feet another rounded slope  
Rises this way and that. The northward spur  
Takes form as if a lion's head did lift  
From shaggy shoulders; to the south the hill

■ Robben Island.

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Hath such a shape as shows, in chine and haunch,  
A couchant lion. Far away are peaks  
With wooded uplands and deep valleys, decked  
By blossoming heaths, flame-coloured aloe-spears,  
And garlands of wild grape. The country folk,  
Simple and friendly, clad in skins or bark  
Gave us fair welcome. 'Twas their winter time;  
But the air mild and still, save when a cloud  
Gathered upon the Table Mount, whereat  
A savage west wind howled, and there would hap  
Tempest and hail. Well pleased, we did abide  
In port of that good hope; and, from a wood  
Plucked straight-grown spars to make us masts  
again,

And trimmed and fashioned these, and set them up  
Firm as before, using for stays and shrouds  
The twisted strips of hide cut in the green;  
Made good our broken oars; recaulked our seams;  
The weary crews refreshed; filled full anew  
The water-pots and meal-jars. Store was, too,

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*T H E   S I X T H   D A Y*

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Of dried meat and of honey. When Gods give  
They give with both hands filled.

A year had fled  
And half a year, in sunshine and in storm,  
Great Pharaoh! since we left thy sea of Suph.  
Here was the end of earth! would the sea-road  
Lead homeward all the way to North and thee?  
Was there a westward path of unbarred main  
Like to that eastern path, which we might cleave  
And come to happy finish, and thy feet?  
Or must we perish in the trackless deep  
And thou not know, and no man living hear  
Where in the dark Ithobal lost thy ships?  
The shore-folk could not teach. Only they said  
Traders and tribesmen, wandering from the West  
Spake of blue sea, blue sea, always blue sea,  
And coasts that stretched and stretched to North-  
ward. None  
In their frail shallops ever dared to round

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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That neighbourhood cante, where the rolling  
South

The roaring West encountered, and the tides  
Breasted so high they seemed to mock the hills.  
If we would die, 'twere best to wait a breeze  
Blows from the east when the great mountain doffs  
Its cap of clouds, and so steal out from clutch  
Of the sea-demons. Peradventure peace  
Might be upon us till the land was turned,  
And then that would befall which must befall.

So we made sacrifice, and on a dawn,  
All gold and saffron, let our painted sails  
Fill to a favouring wind, and driving safe  
Over smooth billows, ran the coast adown  
And made the headland well, and shifted course  
Straight for the North. Seven days the good  
breeze held;

Seven nights the moon of Ishtar gleamed for us.  
Then, lacking water and our rowers spent,

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*T H E   S I X T H   D A Y*

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Under an island green, and white, and red,  
Found we fair shelter. Sea-birds nested there:  
Strange breeds\* with paddle wings and silken  
    necks,

Whose speckled eggs made the men pleasant feasts.  
And next came mists blotting out sea and land;  
And next, I most remember one low point,  
Tree-fringed, which swarmed with apes; the furry  
    folk

Pelted us from the tree-tops with ripe nuts,  
Chattering vain war. A river, after that,  
So thronged with elephants browsing its banks,  
That 'twas as though the sandhills swayed and  
    paced.

Were we but hunters there was ivory  
To build a throne for Egypt. Then a stream†  
The folk named "Golden Waters"; here a bar  
Shut its wide reaches from the thundering main:  
So spread they to a vast lagoon where, sooth!

■ Penguins.

† Orange River.

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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All feathered folk of Earth did seem to dwell.  
For clouds the sky had fowls. They soared or  
swam,  
Or waded in the shallows, spearing fish,—  
Myriads and myriads: while upon the plain  
Those cattle of the Gods,—the dappled deer,—  
Were all the citizens. And, like the land  
Where man's foot cometh not, the seas hereat  
Swarmed with bright life: in the air the albatross  
Stretched wings to wind like two pale galley sails:  
Or skimmed with yellow webs from crest to crest,  
Or poised asleep in the scud. And, at a gut,  
Where breeze and current laid a course for us,  
Under a monstrous cliff, steep to the surf,  
We held all day a merry company  
Of racing dolphins, like black swine of the wave,  
At gambol in the green: such glee of life!  
Such joyous pigs of Dagon, that I stayed  
The hand of one who aimed a shaft at them.  
And farther on, whole islands white as snow

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*T H E   S I X T H   D A Y*

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With droppings of the sea-fowl. Then a ledge  
So thick with forms, half fish, half woman-wise,  
Sleek-headed, melon-breasted, with dark eyes



Lustrous and soft, thou wouldst have thought  
them maids

Gendered by Sea-Gods upon river-nymphs,  
Till the broad tails waved and they plunged,—the  
seals!

And nigh a bay—was called the Whale-Fish Bay—  
We passed an islet, one huge marble rock  
Hollow as is a temple-court, with halls  
And shrines and corridors and cloisters high,  
Filled with dim greenish light; its walls and roofs

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## THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL

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Carved by a thousand tempests into dome,  
Pinnacle, plinth, and ponderous architrave,  
Whereof the entrance was a gateway beamed  
By split slabs and a lintel ragged, vast;  
The door-posts' weathered columns cut by waves  
Grand as thy Memphis. Into this the main,  
Pouring its billows, lashed the floor to foam;  
Spurting in milky fountains through the clefts;  
Streamed in wan cataracts from shelf and coign;  
All with such monstrous roar as if the Deep  
Came there to speak, and bid us stay our quest,  
With terrible commanding.

Farther north

We beached on the white horn of a wide bay,  
Where sand-banks spread, and coral rocks awash  
Broke the long swells on matted weed. She-whales  
Flocked there to calve. By Him of Gaza, Lord!  
Rare sight it was to see those monstrous dams  
Shoulder the shallow water, sailing in



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*T H E S I X T H D A Y*

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To bring to birth. No fish are these, O King!  
No more than bat is bird because it flies;  
No more than scaly crocodiles have fins  
Because they swim. We had a mariner  
Well seen in whales: a sailor oft on Suph  
And in the Midland Sea. He showed us how  
The Gods have framed Leviathan a beast,  
Albeit of the deep. These giant-shes  
Brought forth like women; suckled young at  
teats  
Down by the vent; had nipples like a nurse;  
And, so Bilhadad showed, because the calves  
Sucked ill in water, could at will force milk  
Into the youngling's throat. He taught us how  
The thick white fat was wrapped over the frame  
To keep the creature's blood at heating point;  
And how the tail was set at end of chine,  
Athwart, not lengthwise, for the better speed  
In rising and descending. Also, King!  
These monsters, placable, find bloodless food

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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In what the deep hath smallest and least seen ;  
Since every wave is filled with forms minute—  
Shining by night—as is the air with gnats.  
These and the other unregarded orts  
Of Ocean's face the whale eats ; to that end—  
So crafty go the Gods,—Bilhada<sup>d</sup> showed,  
He hath no teeth, but in the cavernous mouth  
Ridges of bending bone, finished by shreds,\*  
By strings, and fringes, flexed inside the lips  
To make the mouth all sieve. So will he gulp  
A billow in his jaws, and, closing them,  
Sift the brine forth by nostril and by lip,  
To gain a pouchful. Were their appetites  
Vast as their bulk, woe would it be, meseems,  
For weaker tribes. One great whale miscon-  
ceived  
My Silver Dove to be her cub, and rolled  
Motherly sides against us, breaking short,  
A score of oar-blades.

\* Whalebone.

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*T H E S I X T H D A Y*

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North,—still north we sped  
With many a stay, till the “black Cape”\* was  
made,  
A dark rock jutting from a sandy neck,  
With friendly frith behind. Thence, past low  
woods  
And shores by long swells lashed, into a port  
Lobito named, where it was good to be.  
We go ashore for meat; some ambuscade  
Brown reed-buck in the canes; some, lance in hand,  
Follow the moist and perilous paths whereby  
The river-horses wend. Some haul the net  
Along the yellow sands, or bait great hooks  
To take the shark. Yet none for forest lore  
Or sylvan skill matched our bright Lady here.  
We, with a band, went inland,—three days’  
march—  
To spy the country or if trade might be.  
But naked was it all, barren and burned:

\* Cape Negro.

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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No life except the lizard's on the stone,  
The vulture's in the sky. At that third eve,—  
The path being lost, the water-bags all dry,  
Food failing and the sun at act to set,—  
My temper bent. "By Thammuz's blood!"—I  
swore,

"Ithobal is of stuff Gods use for fools  
Since, Nesta, he hath led thee and these friends  
To die a-thirst and hungry in the waste."  
On this she smiled. If one had lightly laughed  
At Ithobal in wrath,—one lip but hers,—  
Blood would have washed it out; but not a whit  
Her dark eyes quailed as mine flung round to her.  
"Good Lord!" spake she, "thy ships have girdled  
now

Two parts, out of three, of Africa,  
And thou wilt knot the silver cincture tight  
At Pharaoh's foot-stool. Yet for all thy skill  
The treasures of my home thou readest not.  
See! where we stand is meat and drink enough

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THE SIXTH DAY

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To have and spare, if well ye wot the signs,  
As little children do, finding the breast  
For all that lawns and sindons may conceal.”  
Thereat she stepped three paces, touched with foot  
A glossy dark green creeper, flat of leaf,  
Tendrilled along a hollow in the sand,  
With knotty nuts upon it, half a score.  
“ This is the *nara*,” quoth she, “ dig and dig,  
And ye shall find sweet water at its roots,  
Half a bow’s length beneath. Also its fruit  
Is comforting and good. But for more need,  
Look yonder, Master, where a thin line juts  
Against the golden sun. A branch ye thought?  
A spray of goat-grass? Nay, dear brave dull eyes,  
Yon is an estridge neck. I clap my hands,  
The loutish housewife rises and makes off,  
Who hath prepared the evening meal for us.”  
She laughed and shouted loud; the great bird starts,  
With fluttered plumes and cackling beak, and flies;  
And while some dig the water, King! we find

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## THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL

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A score of great new ivory eggs, the clutch  
Of many a hen; so sup on lavish fare.

North again, north we row. The new stars sink;  
Old stars begin to rise; past long white cliffs  
Athwart quick Bengo's mouth; under a rock  
Yellow as sulphur, with black hanging woods,  
And then by shores, striped red and white, we win  
Into discoloured seas. A mighty flood  
Pours from the land, staining the blue waves brown,  
And bearing broken trunks and whirling round  
Patches of rooted grass and reeds. High up  
We see, inshore, long-reaching stretch of stream  
That shows no farther bank. It is the mouth  
Of a right mighty river;\* not thy Nile  
Hath nobler gateway, Pharaoh! to the deep.  
At the point's hither side opens a cove  
Where turtles breed. We beach our ships i' the  
smooth

■ Congo.

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THE SIXTH DAY

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And pitch a camp. Presently flock the folk  
Naked, shock-headed, speaking words uncouth,  
Friendly but curious. Gondah trades with them,  
Cloth, and brass wire, and beads for kids, and meal.  
'Midst these a grey-haired wanderer from the  
waste—

Beareth the Eastern face,—hath journeyed far,  
Knoweth the mighty stream and nameth it  
Enzaddi—"Mother of Waters,"—saith  
It riseth out of great lakes far away,  
Bemba and Bangweolo—runneth vast,  
Full-volumed, fertilizing, rich with woods,  
Seven hundred leagues, and twice doth fling its bulk  
Down monstrous rock-walls. When this ancient  
spies

The tribe-mark tintured blue on Nesta's arm,  
Prone falleth he to earth, kisseth her foot,  
Saith in strange tongue words that well pleased the  
ear

Of the listening Lady. "Truly he hath come,"

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## *THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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She whispers, " from the East Sea to the West,  
His eyes have seen the breadth of Africa;  
A Makalanga too! 'tis wonderful! "

That night, as many nights before, we sate  
Girt by a fence of thorns, in light robes wrapt,  
The camp-fires brightly burning, flinging sparks  
Into the murk, and lighting trees and tents,  
While the wide river and the meeting sea  
Made us a sleep-song. Other voices too  
The lonely Libyan night hath; creatures wild,  
That hate the sun, make by the moon and stars  
Their hunting time. You heard the river-horse  
Splash in the reeds; the owl hoot from his branch;  
The grey fox bark; the earth-bear whine and sniff;  
The apes,—four-handed people of the wood—  
Fretfully chatter; then the spotted dog  
Utter his devilish laugh, and the lynx scream,  
Till near at hand the lion, lord of beasts,  
Lays muzzle on the ground, and roars a peal



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*T H E   S I X T H   D A Y*

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Of angry thunder, rolling round the hills,  
Hushing the frightened wilderness. Far off,  
His neighbour lions catch the thunder up,  
And with fierce answers shake the shuddering  
ground.

As so we lay with those rough voices ringed,  
The watch-fires gleaming back from the green eyes  
That showed and shone and vanished, Nesta raised  
Her eyelids from what seemed a dream, and  
asked:—

“ Know’st thou, my Master! what the lions say?  
They have been kings: they are the kings to-night;  
All this is theirs; the river and its reeds,  
The hills, the thickets, and the roaming game,  
The village people and their lives—all’s theirs,  
And this dark world must listen when they speak,  
Will listen many an age. Yet it is spite  
Makes them to roar so bitter; centuries pass  
Like moons at last and after centuries  
The lions know that down this stream will come

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## THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL

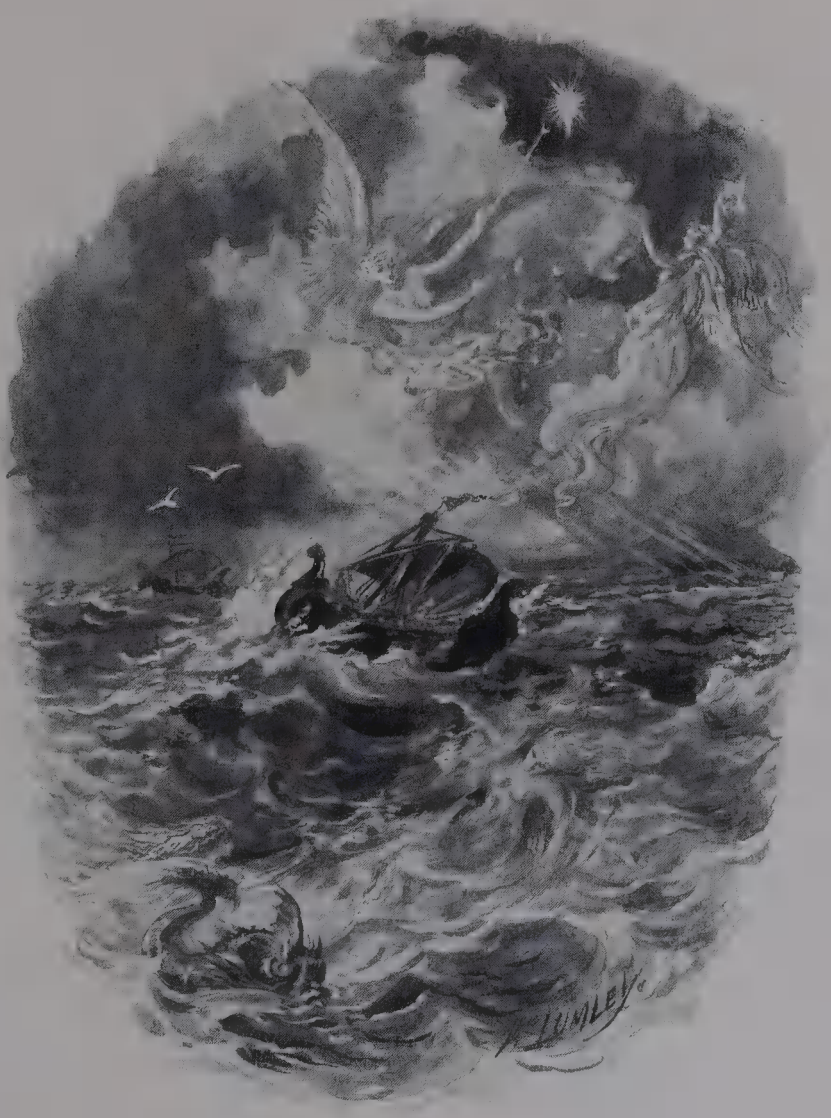
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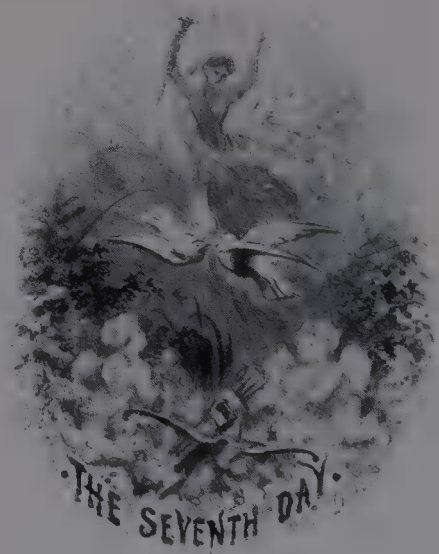
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A white man bringing to the darkness dawn  
As doth the morning star ; opening the gates  
Which shut my people in, till good times hap,  
When cattle-bells, and drums, and festal songs  
Of peaceful people, dwelling happily,  
Shall be the desert's voice both day and night :  
The lions know and roar their hate of it.  
Hark! *Ist-a-la-ni! Ist-a-la-ni!* cries  
The Marsh Hen : knowing what will come at last ;  
And wolves snarl—dreaming of 'the Stone-  
Breaker.' ”\*

\* Native name of Sir H. M. Stanley.

END OF THE SIXTH DAY





## The Seventh and Last Day

*Ithobal, braving dread and doubt  
Hath sailed all Africa about:  
The thirty-seventh moon doth bring  
The Tyrian crews to Egypt's King.*



AY the King live for ever! Ithobal

A little longer prays the royal ear

That he may tell the wondrous finishing

Of this great travel: how thy ships came home,

Most Mighty! to the land which sent them forth.

Twenty-six moons had waxed and waned. 'Twas

Bul,

The third month, when we left Enzaddi's mouth,

And once more followed wheresoever led

That ceaseless coast. Too long it were to name

Journey by journey, changeful stage by stage,

What lands, what seas, unfolded from the void

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Their new-shewn pictures; what strange changes  
fell;

What sudden perils. Each day was a scroll  
With cares laborious and hard toils unsealed,  
Whereon the high Gods wrote that which they  
would.

Yet with our vessels fresh-accoutred, gear  
Made good, sails mended, meal and meat in store,  
And those companion breasts tempered to brass  
By hardships and a hundred rescuings,  
Safe wended we, and fearless, all those leagues  
From the great river's mouth. Rose the Red Point,  
Past tall Zeudana's bluff; across a bay  
Where seven black rocks stand up, we spy a nook  
Cup-shaped, the crater of some fiery mount,  
Which burned itself to stillness ages gone.  
Where flame, and rage, and ravage, had been fierce,  
We lay embosomed, under white cliffs laced  
With tender film of ferns, and delicate buds,  
Purple, or gold, or rose, of climbing plants,

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*S E V E N T H   A N D   L A S T   D A Y*

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Whereon birds, small as bees, sucked honey-blooms  
With long-curved bills: themselves finer than  
flowers,

So painted and so gemmed. Thus, where had  
boiled

The molten rock, and sulphurous fumes had  
belched,

The sea lay tranquil as in mother's lap,

Whom the babe sucks asleep: so doth the Deep

Shift its large humours. Also, King! I saw

A marvel here. Who hath before us known

A shellfish slay a man? The shore folk use

In companies, or one by one, to search

The coral-banks for food; at low tide these

Are live with lowly creatures of the deep,

Sea-flowers, sea-worms, sea-slugs, and cuttle-fish;

At flood the waves wash all. There is a shell\*

Twin-valved, prodigious, white, with fluted lips,

Russet outside, hides in the bladder-weed;

\* *Tridacna Gigas*.

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Clam-like, the body of it fleshy, strong,  
The cup a cubit broad. This thing lurks there  
With opened edge waiting what meat the spray  
Will waft it: fed or handled, it doth close  
With grip of iron jaw. We saw a wretch  
Lie drowned upon the reef, one black foot caught  
In the toothed shell; the hapless carcass cast  
Limp on the rocks, like a brown sea-weed blade.  
He, wading to his shallop, planted step  
On the clam's shell, and this, grasping him hard  
Had chained him till the slow sea rose and choked.

Later I spake with those wise in the ways  
Of coast and current; people of the beach  
Who taught us we were come to where the shore,  
Not longer trending northward, turns and leads  
Straight towards the setting sun; seven hundred  
、 leagues  
Some did suppose, or five, or six, some said.  
Yet, if we chanced the fortune of good airs,



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*S E V E N T H   A N D   L A S T   D A Y*

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And struck across, well-watered and well-stored,  
Rowing by night and day when fair winds failed,  
Either on high sea we should founder, lost ;  
Or, by bold venture 'scape a two moons' toil,  
Skirting Biafra and deep-bayed Benin.  
Which, sooth ! we did ; first coming happily,  
At seven-score leagues, to a long island laid  
Over against Aranga—'tis a stream  
Runs from the inner hills.\* And yet anew  
We pushed forth hazarding, and crossed sea-wastes,  
Which in the hurricane heave mountainous,  
But now slept blue and smooth. Nearing that  
coast  
The blue waxed grey and brown ; the white foam  
foul—  
Long ere the topmost distant peak was eyed—  
With flooding forth of some great stream † that sent  
The rains of half her Libya to the main  
By many a mouth. With the land-water blew

\* Cape Lopez.

† River Niger.

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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The land-wind, and the muddied waves lapped low,  
Across the face of Benin all the way  
To Eko Island.\*

Yet one marvel more  
I had foregone, Great Pharaoh! to recount.  
Behold these hides which my slaves lay at foot  
Of thy royal seat,—skins brown and dun—we  
stripped  
The shaggy coverings from the strangest beast  
Thy servant's eyes have seen. Nigh to that  
stream—

Zaire or Enzaddi—opens in the land  
A deep laguna, fenced afar with hills,  
And fed by water-ways, which wind and creep  
Through forests dark with giant trees, and hung  
From glade to glade with curtains of grey moss  
And snake-like climbing vines. In its dense shades,  
Lord of the gloom, there dwells a monstrous ape,†

\* Lagos.

† Gorilla.

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*SEVENTH AND LAST DAY*

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Ugly and dreadful, in his strength most fierce,  
But man-like, fashioned wholly as a man,  
A wide flat face, small ears, a hairy crown,



Nostrils of blackamoor, and human ways:  
Short-legged with mighty loins and arms that reach  
To touch his shin as he doth walk erect.  
For walk he doth, with woodland staff in palm,  
Most like a savage forester; the hand  
Short-thumbed, but framed to skilful purposes,  
Hath a so stubborn grip that he can grasp  
The python's throat and squeeze its life away  
Spite of its writhing coils; or break a jaw

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Of bounding leopard. In the tree he builds  
A nest of boughs ; there keeps his sylvan home,  
His one ill-favoured wife, children, and store  
Of forest fruit. Yet though the creature eats  
No food save roots and berries, not a beast  
So mad, so dangerous. The lion shrinks  
To cover, seeing on its hunting-path  
This " Man of the Woods " approach, rough staff in  
    hand,  
And huge arms aching for some foe to slay.  
The twain who wore these coats my comrades  
    met  
Where no tree gave them refuge, so they fought  
Two against ten, and ere they yielded breath,  
Cracked the neckbone of one, and ripped up one  
Among my hunters, dying savagely  
With cries like wounded men.

At Eko Isle

Once more we saw the gem of Ishtar gleam

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*SEVENTH AND LAST DAY*

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Above the marge, the North Star. Speeding  
thence,

Through fair and foul we pass Whydah's lagoon ;  
Cast anchor in a river flowing down  
From Ningo Hill. Here are a savage folk,  
Dahoms and Ashantees, eating men's flesh ;  
Filling the drink-bowls of their gods with blood ;  
Cities of skulls and slaughter. Joyfully  
We parted from the cruel land ; set course  
For Accra, for Amkwana ; rock and bay  
Of hot Secondi, and the Three Point cape.  
Next the Assini stream with spacious lakes  
Behind its sands. Then ever westward came  
Long rampart of red cliffs, Yawoda crag—  
Striped rose and white like a flamingo's wing—  
Jutting to sea. Here is the Ivory coast,  
Abode of elephants ; at Nano town,  
Which hath its huts on bank of Berebi,  
Door-posts and lintels were of milky tusks,  
And tusks lay heaped in sheds, and tusks did mark

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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One man's field from another's; these I deemed  
Were spoils of elephants which die of age.  
One lordly brute of the vast herds we spied  
Might sack and scatter Nano. Still our coast  
Went westward till we make the Cape of Palms\*—  
Tree-capped, tied to the shore by thread of sand:  
Behind its groves a river good for rest.  
A strange lure cheated us in nearing. Grey  
The mist lay round the cape; in its faint veil  
The rocks and reefs, the banks and beaches,  
    hung,  
With trees and towns and hills in the still air.  
It was the lying light, the mirage; such  
Mocks thirsty desert men, drawn from their path  
By vision of fair water, shadowing palms  
And men and temples. I had deemed all true  
Till Nesta said, "Have heed, Master! of this  
At entering; 'tis a trick of fiends who dwell  
In storm-clouds and the evil weather."

■ Cape Palmas.

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*SEVENTH AND LAST DAY*

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Now

Once more the Ram and Dove upon our prows  
Looked homeward; once more northerly we steer.  
By Monkey Island, and by Wappi Head,  
Wended we well to Butu, and a stream,  
Pobâmo named, next Tembo, and some isles  
Green with bananas; so by many a stage  
We sight the promontory, forest-clad  
With great hills piercing heaven; 'tis the mount  
Of lions.\* Northward of the dark green ridge  
Opens a stream, and I must enter there  
For that the Silver Dove hath sprung a leak.  
Yestereve and all night by some ill-hap  
Came in the sea, and soaked our grain, and  
swamped  
The forward hold, till half my oarsmen baled,  
And half were rowing. In the stream we find  
A shelving shore, and beached. 'Sooth! strange  
to see!

■ Sierra Leone.

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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It is a sword-fish that hath wrought us this,  
Nigh ruining our venture. Yea! a fish  
Six cubits long that hath for nose a beak  
Bony, shaped like a sword, sharp like a sword  
And hard as tempered steel; strong fins and tail  
That in its times of anger and attack  
Drive it like arrow through the waves. It hates  
The whale; mistook us for its enemy;  
And dealt us deadly thrust. The blade had gone  
Through half a cubit of fir plank and oak—  
Loosening a beam end—where the sea poured  
in.

The fish had broken off; his sword stood out  
A span clear in the hold.

By Matakong—

A lovely isle with sloping lawns and groves—  
We pass to Pongo, and the channel made  
By safe Arango. Next was Bulamà  
And Jeba river; then long stretch of sands



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*S E V E N T H   A N D   L A S T   D A Y*

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To Kisamanze and the Gambia,  
By Dakar and Goree to a green cape—\*  
Slopes from the sea-shore towards two rounded  
    paps  
O'er-looking isle and bay. Here came thy ships  
Westernmost, Mighty Pharaoh! of their road:  
Nothing lay west of us except a main  
Known only to the Sun, which dippeth there  
Under the World. And thence to Senegal  
And her white headland,† and red Bojador,  
Eastward the shore now bends. Cape Juby lifts  
A green hill, and a stream flows to the sea  
Beneath white banks. Onward by Mogador  
We mark huge Atlas rear his snowy neck  
To hold the sky aloft: this side and that  
The lean grey hills peer over to the brine  
To gaze on voyagers whose ships are come  
From other hills so far: from other shores  
Which watch the Day spring from another East.

■ Cape Verde.

† Cape Blanco.

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Then as I stood upon my steering deck  
Eyeing the bare crags pass, and new peaks spring  
Out of the blue, Nesta was by my side,



And took my hand whispering : “ Master ! I saw  
Good omen at the dawn. Kneeling to pray,  
When the first gold lit on Astarte’s bird  
Which is upon our stem, I marked her stretch  
Her silver wings to all their glittering length,  
And arch her shining neck, and utter low  
The love-note of a Dove ; I think she hears  
Some home sounds in the air, or seeth that  
Which promiseth us rest.” Even as she spake,

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*SEVENTH AND LAST DAY*

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What mark I? On the left two pointed hills,  
Facing them, seven low tops; and in their front  
A black cliff\* rising from the rippled blue,  
Which suddenly is narrowed so that land,  
To left as well as right, hangs in the sky,  
A violet film: a film which gathers form,  
Deepens to green and purple, and then grows  
A huge rock,† like a couching lion, set  
Over against the cliff. I know! I know!  
Here is the Ocean-Gate! Here is the Strait,  
Twice before seen, where goes the Middle Sea  
Unto the Setting Sun and the Unknown—  
No more unknown. Ithobal's ships have sailed  
Around all Africa. Our task is done!  
These are the Pillars! this the Midland Sea!  
The road to Tyre is yonder! Every wave  
Is homely. Yonder, sure, Old Nilus pours  
Into this sea the Waters of a World,  
Whose secret is his own, and thine and mine.

\* Cape Spartel.

† Gibraltar.

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*THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL*

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Great Lord! no need to tell thee how we came  
By coasts familiar, and by well-tryed paths,  
Quit of our quest. Thirty-five moons had waned  
Since we sailed forth of Suph. My two brave ships  
Kept the sea safe. The third, if the Gods pleased,  
Deep ballasted with gold, was back with thee.  
Out of my sixteen-score of gallant souls  
There lacked some five-score, lost by land or sea,  
In battle slain, or torn by prowling beasts,  
Or dead by evil airs; and one I slew,  
The traitor Nimroud. Of our native aids  
The most are lusty, well-contented, free,  
Glad to be part of this high enterprise,  
And see the great new world. But most I bless  
The holy Gods above and my fair Star,  
Because I carry back, unharmed, serene,  
Radiant with joy at this our victory  
And thine, O King of Kings! her who was Life  
And Soul, and Guide, and Good of all we did:  
My Lady Nesta of the noble heart.

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*S E V E N T H   A N D   L A S T   D A Y*

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Ah! like to one who dreams that he must die,  
And waking finds him at a golden feast ;  
Or like to one whose hapless eyes have lost  
The lovely light of day, when sudden gleam  
Of the world's joy and glory comes again,  
And all his darkness dies ; so was it now,  
Great Pharaoh ! with thy servants, day by day,  
Conning the happy sea-signs.    What to us  
Any more irked the straining at the oar,  
The narrow bed, the hard-worn plank, the toil  
To beach and unbeach ?    In our ragged sails  
Flapped triumph : in our oar-ports, worn to gloss  
By oar-looms grinding through five thousand  
    leagues,  
Shone pride.    My merry rowers loved the ships  
So staunch, so faithful, and so friendly grown—  
Their good sea-houses.    Pipe and drum kept time  
More lively than before to the light song  
Of Thalamite and Zeugite, as we skimmed  
Over the autumn waters to that mouth,

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THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL

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Where thy broad Nilus voids his western wave;  
And battered, torn and lean, but jubilant,  
Joyous, and eager for the grace of this—  
To see thy face and kneel before thy feet,  
And lay thee, for thy favour and thy trust,  
The Secret of the Unknown Earth made known.  
For this we did rejoice: for this are here.

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All this did Hodo with a heedful pen,  
On the papyrus write, finishing:—

*Then*

*On ending of the seventh day of the story  
Our Lord the King, sitting in state and glory,  
Rose from his throne, and in his robe and crown,  
With gentle smiling majesty came down.  
Before him on their faces that good day  
Ithobal and his people lowly lay,  
The Lady Nesta and his Captains two,*

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SEVENTH AND LAST DAY

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*And in a ring behind their sea-stained crew :  
And yet behind, the negroes and the slaves,  
While on the stones their bows and spears and glaives,  
Rusted in battle, lay ; with wild-beast hides  
And bars of gold and pearls, and what besides  
Their sea spoils were. And our Lord Pharaoh laid  
Ithobal's head upon his breast, and said :—  
“Ithobal, Son of Magon ! for thy King,  
Lo ! thou hast wrought a wondrous famous thing,  
Vaster than victories ; I name thee chief  
Of all my navies, and I give thee fief  
Of lands along my Nilus, grove and field,  
Such as shall royal wealth and greatness yield ;  
As many schœnes as on the dreadful sea  
Thou hast accomplished of leagues for me.”  
Then did our gracious Lord raise by the hand  
The lady, speaking soft : “We understand  
Thy wisdom, Daughter ! and thy work and worth ;  
Thou art not of our Egypt by thy birth,  
But shalt be, for thy deeds, and by my grace  
Princess and Priestess in a chosen place :  
I make thee Lady hence of Amen-ru ;  
Thine now the shrine, and thine its revenue.”*

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THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL

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*Afterwards many a gift with liberal word  
Amongst those others did our mighty Lord  
Bestow ; and bade Aahmes—Chamberlain—  
Pour largesse for them, gold and robes and grain,  
And palace meats for life ; the slaves set free ;  
Hanno and Sothēs, officers to be ;  
Handah and Gondah by rich boons repaid ;  
A house and dowry for each faithful maid,  
Asenath and her fellow. There withal  
A bounteous feast was set in Pharaoh's hall ;  
And all the city kept high revelry  
Till the moon clomb into the starry sky.*

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(NESTA is heard singing)

*Under Astarte's moon,  
At the soft night's silvery noon  
Sleepeth my city of Neith,  
The city of Pharaoh slumbereth ;  
The palms are like columns black  
With the dark-blue heaven at their back,  
And the shadows of porch and wall*



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SEVENTH AND LAST DAY

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*On the porphyry pavements fall  
Like purple carpets of silence. No lack  
Of joy in the white-walled street  
Where townsman and kinsman meet :  
And the houses are busy with what they say  
Of the marvellous, glorious, goodly array  
When Ithobal stood before the Throne  
And for seven days opened a world unknown.  
This marvellous tale of the Far-away  
And the secrets of Gods all shown.  
In his palace Lord Pharaoh is glad  
For the splendour of this gain had.  
In their huts the people are proud  
For the fame of this deed, long and loud,  
Which shall make them renowned alway.  
In harbour the galleys lie  
Safe under the spangled sky ;  
Each weary sea-worn keel  
No longer doth fret, or feel  
The smiting wave and the mournful sigh  
Of the tempest which gathers to wreck.  
Steady and smooth is each deck ;  
The tired sails sleep, and the painted eye*

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## THE VOYAGE OF ITHOBAL

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*On each red prow is at rest.  
For all is come to the best  
And no more dangers to search and spy.  
The oars themselves seemed to keep  
A pleasure and peace in their sleep  
As the moonbeams shine on the glistening oar-ports nigh.*

*And I, happy Nesta, the while  
Sit in the sight of Nile,  
In the marble temple of Amen-ru :  
For I am the priestess, and what I do  
With the lands and temple and town  
Is done henceforth with mine own.  
And Ithobal's head is on my lap ;  
The Gods have given good hap ;  
I am here with my Lover and Lord and King,  
And our tale to the sistrum I sing ;  
There shall never be nobler told or shown ;  
For now are the Strange Seas known.*

THE END









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Arnold, Sir Edwin  
The voyage of Ithobal

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